

The Forum Gazette

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Fortnightly

Rupees Two

Bill to Intercept Postal Mail A Violation of Citizens' Freedom

Harji Malik

The Indian Post Office (Amendment) Bill 1986 came up for debate on Monday, 24 November and, with little discussion, was passed by the Lok Sabha on Tuesday. The opposition MPs' mild criticism was dictated only by the fear that the Bill would enable the Government to bring *Political opponents* under surveillance. The far more sinister implications of the Bill, which poses a threat to all citizens and is an intrusion into their privacy, appear to have escaped the opposition. As the *Times of India* commented editorially, describing the Bill as "obnoxious", "... the relevant portions of the Bill, in particular Clause 16 which seeks to amend Section 26 of the Indian Post Office Act 1898 are violative of the freedom of belief, expression and association in a more basic manner". Clause 16, one of 39 clauses is the core of the Amendment. Section 26 which it seeks to replace is as follows.

26 (1) on the occurrence of any public emergency, or in the interest of the public safety or tranquility, the Central Government, or a State Government, or any officer specially authorised in this behalf by the Central or the State Government, may, by order in writing, direct that any postal article or class or description of postal articles in course of transmission by post shall be intercepted, or detained, or shall be disposed of in such a manner as the authority issuing the order may direct.

(2) If any doubt arises as to the existence of a public emergency or as to whether any act done under sub-section (1) was in the interest of the public safety or tranquility, a certificate of the Central Government or, as the case may be, of the State Government shall be conclusive proof on the point.

The 1898 Act was passed by a colonial government to enable it to rule over native subjects whom it, justifiably, suspected of working for its overthrow. The 1986 Amendment is proposed by a government elected by the people to safeguard and serve their interests, by the popular regime of what is so loudly and proudly proclaimed as the world's biggest democracy. Clause 16, the relevant clause, reads:

For Section 26 of the Principal Act, the following section

shall be substituted, namely.

"26. The Central Government or the State Government or any officer specially authorised in this behalf by the Central or State Government, may, if satisfied that it is necessary or expedient so to do in the interests of public safety or tranquility, the sovereignty or integrity of India, the security of the State, friendly relations with foreign States or public order or for preventing incitement to the commission of any offence, or on the occurrence of public emergency, by order, in writing, direct that any postal article or class or description of postal articles in the course of transmission by post, shall be intercepted or detained or shall be disposed of in such manner as the authority issuing the order, may direct."

(2), the compulsion on the Central or State Government to produce a certificate as conclusive proof that the necessary conditions for taking action under the Act exists is totally done away with in the amendment. Whereas our colonial rulers deemed the 1898 Act adequate for dealing with any "public emergency", or with a situation harmful to the "interest of the public safety or tranquility", the government of India today finds it necessary to add "the sovereignty and integrity of India, the security of the State, friendly relations with foreign states or public order or for preventing incitement to the commission of any offence."

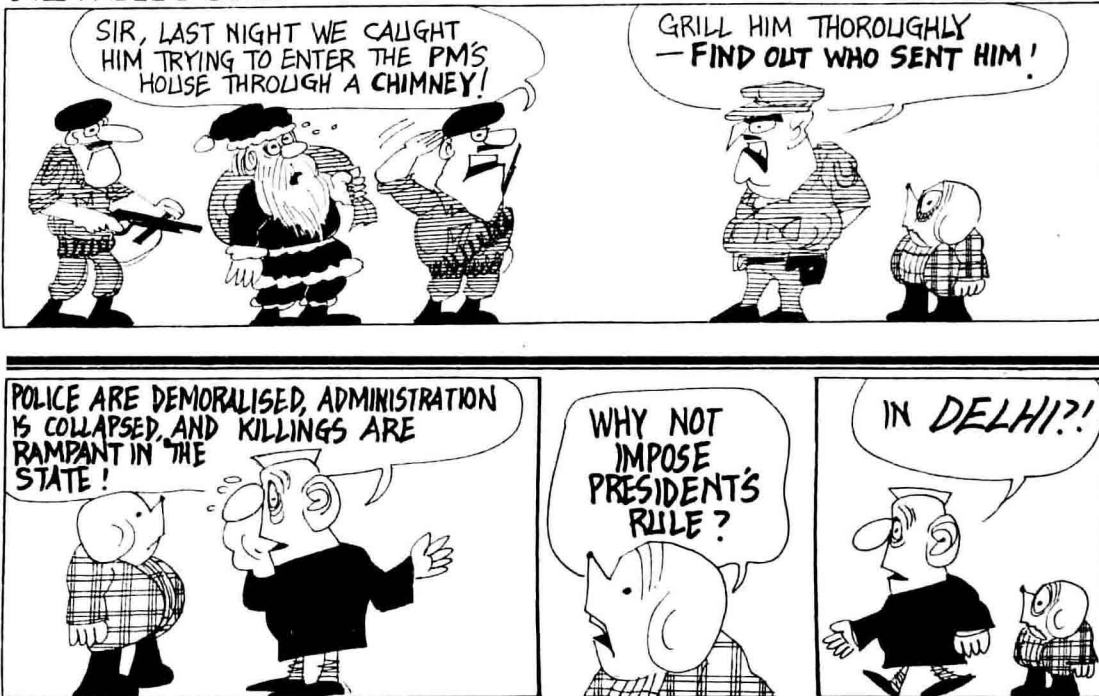
Many Implications

What are the implications of these additions? Does this mean that criticism of a country with which India has friendly relations — and this is true of most countries in the world — can be considered as against "friendly relations" with that country? What is the precise meaning of "public order"? And above all, what appals those Indians who believe in civil rights, freedom of the press, of expression, of association, in short in normal democratic freedoms, are the words "for preventing incitement to the commission of any offence".

The *Times of India* editorial states categorically "Thus there can be no dispute that the Bill seeks to confer upon the state unlimited powers to tamper with any citizen's mail or the

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NEWSHOUND



Bullets Take Punjab to Political Dead End

Baljit Malik

Bullets have brought Punjab to a dead-end. Police and para-military bullets, terrorist bullets, bullet talk and solutions attempted through bullets. In the rest of the country Sikhs continue to live in fear of violent reprisals, not sure to what extent the authorities will allow mobsters a free hand. A patchwork law and order situation persists. Virtually the same is true of the Hindu minority in Punjab. The

fact that a carnage of the 1984 kind has not occurred there offers little consolation to the Hindus in the State. It is bad enough that they live in fear. In the meantime fear, anger, desperation and terrorism feed on the bankruptcy of leadership both in Delhi and Chandigarh. As the political process takes a back seat, bullets reign supreme from Hoshiarpur to Delhi's Bangla Sahib gurudwara.

December 15, turned out to be a day of political freeze in the history of the Punjab crisis. On this day, when the Punjab Assembly was reconvened for its winter session, a government which for all intents and purposes no longer enjoys the confidence of the people was able to stall the admitting of two no-confidence motions against it. This it did by arresting some of its political opponents, among whom were the dissident Akali leaders Prakash Singh Badal and Gurcharan Singh Tohra. Surjit Singh Barnala has increasingly attracted the reputation of being unusually subservient to the Centre. This subservience has been all the more telling in the absence of a cred-

ible political policy towards Punjab. The Accord signed in July 1985 did amount to a clear policy vis-a-vis the state and it would have made sense for the Centre to back Barnala via the Accord to cut through the dead-end in Punjab.

Death of The Accord

But the Punjab Accord died on January 26th this year when the government headed by Rajiv Gandhi failed to honour its pledge that Chandigarh would be transferred to Punjab. Barnala on his part failed the people of his stage by not resigning when the Centre went back on the very foundation of his election victory. Since then the Centre and the Barnala government

in Punjab between them have seen to it that political initiative of the kind that could break through the impasse has also been added to the mounting death count in that troubled state. While the Centre has not been able to make even an inch of progress in replacing the Accord with some other blueprint which would show the way towards a settlement in Punjab, Surjit Singh Barnala has hardly helped by dissipating the credibility he had gained when he led the Akalis to victory in the Assembly elections last year.

The political process, and those who are supposed to operate and control it, having voluntarily 'surrendered' or withdrawn into inactivity it is bullet raj and retaliation by bullets, which between them are killing the life-blood of Punjabi and Indian society. Between them the State and those who constitute the terrorist hard-

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See editorial

ANNOUNCEMENT

Readers and Subscribers are informed that the posting dates given to us by the post office for concessional mailing has made it necessary to change our publication dates. The Forum Gazette will now dated 5-20 and 20-5 of every month.

Plain Speaking, Sensible Thinking on Punjab

Harji Malik

Over the past fortnight comment on the Punjab situation reflects greater understanding of factors critical to any peaceful solution. The Parliamentary debate on the Punjab, triggered off by the Kudla killings, however, did not follow this pattern. While the emotion of the members is, perhaps, understandable under the circumstances, the replies of the Prime Minister and Home Minister offered little evidence of positive thinking. The Akali members of the Lok Sabha were conspicuously absent during the debate. In the Rajya Sabha General J.S. Aurora condemned the killings.

S.S. Gill's prescription for "The Way Out in Punjab" (x12 Indian Express 25 Nov 1986) points out that "The Punjab Accord had been faulted on many counts. But it was not only an act of moral courage but of political sagacity! It broke the evil spell of post-Operation Bluestar stalemate and restored the political processes in the State. The accord went sour not because of flawed content but because of tardy implementation and failure to secure wider involvement of the contending parties." (emphasis added)

Gill lays great stress on the role of the Ardas in shaping the Sikh psyche. "This Ardas, couched in simple Punjabi of everyday speech, is recited with great emotion in most Sikh homes and children learn it by heart from very early in life. Its vivid and emotive images are drawn from real happenings in Sikh history... Its great power as a psychological conditioner of a believer's mind cannot be over-estimated... Reinforced by daily repetition, it renders a believer readily receptive to any appeal to risk his life for a 'cause'."

"There is urgent need to restore the primacy of political processes and keep at it doggedly until a way out is found" Gill argues and makes the im-

portant observation that "... leaders of public opinion have never seriously tried to start a people's movement against terrorism in Punjab." Echoing the appeal which is being voiced more and more, Gill suggests that there has to be a dialogue with the extremists. "It would be viewed as a dangerous precedent and compromise with forces of evil. But politics is the arts of the possible. It is also the art of learning to live with inconvenient facts. After all, the

of a sense of hurt, alienation and defiance. About what? The failure to implement the Punjab Accord, except in part. The territorial issue has been obfuscated and (temporarily) put on ice. No action has been taken on the Jodhpur detainees who have been incarcerated for over 2 years without charges or trial. Above all, the November 1-2, 1984, carnage in Delhi and elsewhere has gone totally unpunished without question of formal regret."

hundred eyes for an eye and a hundred teeth for a tooth. We have used that answer already and we are further away from a solution. Let us not be shocked out of our sense of right and wrong by a Hoshiarpur, though let the terrorists be warned that the nation will not take another Hoshiarpur. Such insanity will only find an answer in more insanity and heaven alone knows where we go from there.

"Even without Hoshiarpur, the Punjab problem will be long with us. But the tragedy is that it will be with us because we fail to see it for what it is."

The Centre is to blame

The alienation of the Sikhs from the Centre also figures prominently in Prem Shankar Jha's analysis of the Punjab problem ("Punjab: Back to the Brink", *Hindustan Times*, 4 November 1986). Jha points out that because of their mistrust of the Centre few Sikhs "are willing to give the Central Government credit for its firm handling of the communal disturbances that have occurred in the Capital and elsewhere in response to the slaughter of innocents in Punjab." Jha also reminds us that "Mr Rajiv Gandhi spent the night before the cremation of his mother — surely the most harrowing day of his life — touring the far-flung areas of Delhi, cursing and haranguing rioters, in an effort to curb the violence". But few people are aware of this.

On the failure to implement the accord Jha opines "There was nothing inevitable about the erosion of strength of the Akali moderates, and it has been brought about only partly by infighting among the Akalis. The more important cause is the failure of the Central Government to implement the key clauses of the Rajiv-Longowal accord."

"A year and a half after the accord was signed, and 17 months after Sant Longowal became a martyr to the cause of Indian unity, apart from the rehabilitation of most of the

Barnala understand perfectly the underlying causes of the drift away from the Akalis. These are the growing unemployment among Sikh youth following the slowdown of recruitment into the army and the sharp fall in emigration to Britain and Canada; the increasing fragmentation of landholdings, which had made as many as 71 per cent of the operational holdings in Punjab marginal or non-viable; the weakening of the momentum of the Green Revolution, and slow growth of job opportunities in industry. All these have given birth to an incipient despair among Sikh youth from poorer families, that a party dominated by affluent Jat landlords is ill-equipped to assuage... The split between Mr Barnala and Mr Badal has occurred essentially over how to cope with this challenge."

Jha sees as the only alternative to civil war, which he foresees as a possible consequence of President's Rule, preservation of the Barnala government explaining "The reason is that so long as Mr Barnala is in power, the Centre can still defuse the tension in Punjab to some extent by hastening the implementation of the Rajiv Gandhi-Longowal Accord and, more particularly, by releasing the Mishra Commission report, taking firm action against those indicted in it, and if necessary, following it up with another commission, composed of both Hindus and Sikhs which will hold public hearings into what happened in Delhi."

On December 5, *The Hindustan Times* hard hitting editorials "A Retrograde Step" referring to the Government's decision to declare eight districts in the Punjab as disturbed areas, pointed out that "Successful police operations make it possible for the Government to be generous without seeming to appease the disaffected elements. The Government had achieved this precondition for a political settlement in the months between August and October. But it let the opportunity pass..." The edit goes on to say that it was to preempt any attempts at a settlement that the terrorists went into action against General Vaidya, in Muktsar, against Ribeiro and now, Hoshiarpur. What is lacking, therefore, is not a political will" the edit continues, citing the Government's latest actions "but the right political advice. It is still not too late to salvage the situation in Punjab but the starting point must be to realise that the first steps in this direction must be taken before December 18th when the vote of confidence against Mr Barnala comes up in the Punjab Vidhan Sabha and that this step must be political and not military or constitutional."

These words of warning from the *Hindustan Times*, a paper known in the past for its bias against the Sikh community, reflect the realistic assessment of to-day's crisis shared by many responsible voices in the press.

INDIAN EXPRESS

Governments has reached an accord with Laldenga and, very wisely not permitted his past to bedevil the settlement."

People's Action

George Verghese writing in the *Indian Express* "People's Action for Punjab" (5 Nov 1986) proposes in detail what form such action could take. "Why not a credible non-governmental initiative, say by Baba Amte's group, the Gandhians and the Punjab Group (or any others), to convene a Delhi Dialogue to which a cross section of all interest groups might be invited: youth, women, religious leaders, those overground and able to represent the views of rival extremists, political leaders of various hues, including all the Akali factions, the SGPC, the academics, trade unionists and kisan leaders, traders, jurists and other professionals, media persons and cultural workers, and representatives of Punjab, Haryana and the Centre, should they wish to attend. The number need not exceed 100 and the agenda could be broadly structured under the headings of terrorism and law and order; the Accord and its implementation (which would take in the Jodhpur detainees and the November 1984 killings); community relations and confidence building; and the long term future."

"Let the rival grievances and contentions be freely aired and answered" says Verghese, reasoning that "Something gained, nothing lost, would provide public opinion a basis for pressing the Government to respond on those issues on which the Dialogue may have reflected something of a consensus... The process of dialogue-action-dialogue would moderate extreme opinion and isolate the die-hards, thus robbing them of an advantage they now enjoy. It would reduce fear and embolden people to act in defence of reason, humanity and justice and aid of benign state power."

"What confronts India is a national problem!" Verghese states in categorical terms "It is everybody's business, everybody's responsibility. If things continue to go wrong, India and Indians will suffer. He goes on to stress that terrorism and Khalistan only represent the fringe and both must be condemned. "If others are silent or even uneasily sympathetic or admiring it is because

Understanding the Sikh Hurt

In his understanding of the hurt to the Sikh community (dating from Operation Bluestar) S. Mulgaokar expresses himself in the strongest, most incisive terms. "I believed and I still believe that Sikh terrorism has stronger motivations than Khalistani propaganda or the quest for a Sikh homeland, he writes ("Insanity Fair", *Indian Express* 6 Nov. 1986). There are Sikhs, countless numbers of them, who have lost a brother, a mother, a father, a lover, a friend in the massacre in Delhi following the assassination of Mrs Gandhi. He is not told such nuggets of truth about it as the inquiry — itself held under conditions designed to inhibit the emergence of truth — may have found it impossible to suppress. Again, he suffers himself or through those dear to him, the excesses of rule under the army. Thousands were in jail without a trial and without a specific charge.

"The wounds of injustice on this scale, especially when directed against a defined community, must leave a mark and, in a community as assertive as the Sikhs, will be generally interpreted as an insult to the communal psyche that must be assuaged."

"This is what inspires the terrorists, much more than any favour to establish a Khalistan." Mulgaokar describes the "prob-

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lem of the terrorist" not as a temporary phenomenon but "the result of a deep-seated affront to the self respect and dignity of a proud people. Can we not understand", he asks "that the full participation is the sine qua non of the well being of this nation, including its unity and integrity about which there is so much concern these days without understanding the deeper implications of what is involved."

Bungling over Badal and Tohra

He deplores the placing of Badal, Tohra and others under arrest, stating "That it will merely cut off one more line of communication that could possibly have been used to some purpose..." He concludes "The answer in Punjab is not a

jawans who had deserted their units after Operation Bluestar, not a single clause of the accord has been fulfilled... the Centre has shown a remarkable, not easily explained, disregard for the value of time in this matter". Thus putting the blame squarely on the Centre for non-implementation Jha points out that this has seriously undermined Barnala.

Barnala-Badal Split Explained

In a shrewd analysis of Akali dissension he attributes the split between Barnala and Badal, not to their personal differences or ambitions but "in their differing perceptions of how to stem the erosion of support (from their electorate)" which he says is thanks to the Central Governments failure to honour the accord. "Mr Badal and Mr

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Sikh Forum National Convention Condemns Terrorism, Government Refusal to Book Nov. '84 Mobsters

Forum Gazette Transferred to Ekta Trust

Gazette News Service

The All India Convention of the "Sikh Forum" in New Delhi on 29-30 November 1986 had a good turnout of members from both the capital, and other places in the country. Members from Varanasi, Bombay, Imphal and Kurukshetra were present and participated actively. The Convention passed three resolutions. The first emphasized the need to publish the Mishra Commission Report and to those responsible for the anti-Sikh carnage of November 1984. It also called on the Central and State governments to ensure security for Sikhs living outside Punjab in all ways.

The second resolution urged the government to implement the Rajiv-Longowal Accord in the true spirit of the Accord. It condemned acts of terrorism unreservedly and exhorted the Centre to tackle the Punjab imbroglio as a political problem, not just a law and order situation. The third resolution appealed to all Sikh parties and groups to unite under one banner to try to resolve, jointly, the series of crisis faced by the Punjab and by the Sikh community.

Report of Forum Activities

The Report on the "Sikh Forum's" activities for the year was presented to the Convention. Highlights were the formation of the General Council

(which met on Saturday 29 November), protest demonstrations held on different occasions and several public meetings, some organised in collaboration with PUCL, PUDR, CFD and Manushi, some organised by the Forum to call attention to the events of November 1984. Area meetings were also held in different parts of Delhi like Kalkaji, Tilak Vihar, Rajouri Garden, etc.

One of the "Sikh Forum's" most important activities, as detailed in the report was its active assistance to the Mishra Commission bearings through cooperation with the Citizens' Justice Committee. The Forum contributed both human and financial resources and it was because of the Forum's efforts that 1000 affidavits were submitted to the Mishra Commission. Out of these nearly 600, 100 and 250 respectively from Delhi, Bokaro and Kanpur were submitted. Members of the Forum visited several places in Punjab and other states to procure the affidavits in cooperation with local units of the "Sikh Forum".

Forum and the Media

The "Sikh Forum" also took up necessary issues with the Press Council regarding communal reporting, etc. But the most significant activity of the Forum vis a vis the media was the launching in April 1986 of

the fortnightly *The Forum Gazette*. This paper has been produced regularly since April 15th. The total number of subscribers enrolled until 29 November was 2004. Approximately an additional 1500 copies are being sold through market outlets and other counter sales.

Educational Programme

Educational Stipends and Rehabilitation of November victims continues to be the other most significant element of the Forum activities. To date 684 children have been covered by the programme in which the guardian of each child is being given a stipend of Rs. 150/- every quar-

ter. About 150 to 200 children are still to be covered by this programme. The refusal of the Home Ministry to allow credit of foreign contributions to the Forum's bank account is responsible for this failure. About 200 children are getting stipends from foreign donors but until the matter is cleared up these stipends are being arranged for within the country.

The Forum's Rehabilitation efforts are still involved with the 36 families still living in the Farash Bazaar Camp and the 20 widows in Hari Nagar Camp. The 36 families, mostly from Tirlokpuri have not yet been given alternate accommodation while

the 20 widows have not yet been allotted accommodation suitable to them.

General Council Meeting

The General Council meeting which preceded the Convention gave a chance to the members to present their problems. They pointed out the difficulties faced by many Sikhs living in Delhi and elsewhere, and they made suggestions for ways and means for the "Sikh Forum" to expand its activities and improve its effectiveness.

Forum Gazette Transferred to 'Ekta Trust'

The Chairman, General Aurora, explained the difficulties being experienced by the Forum in receiving foreign contributions for the Educational Programme, which has resulted in the need to transfer the *Forum Gazette* to the ownership of the *Ekta Trust*. The Chairman explained that initially the idea had been that the paper should be published by a Trust, hence the registration and other formalities of the *Ekta Trust* had been completed earlier. A resolution was passed for the transfer. The President of the Forum, General Aurora, will be the Chairman of the Trust, which will have as its first members, Mr. I.K. Gujral and Dr Amrik Singh. Others will be approached later.



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mere suspicion that it may be 'necessary or expedient' to do so to prevent any possible incitement 'to the commission of any offence.' ... There can be no justification whatever for granting any government, however benign, such blanket powers as Clause 16 of the Bill seeks to do."

Government's Excuse

The government's excuse is that it must be authorised to intercept the mail possibly being exchanged between terrorists and their supporters, both at home and abroad. But his is no justification for such blanket powers. In the 'Statement of Objects and Reasons' for the Amendment, the government states that "There has been a demand that the provisions of this section should be reviewed. The Law Commission has, in its Report gone into the matter at great length. It is proposed to amend this section so as to clearly bring the provisions thereof within the limits permitted by the Constitution." It is unfortunate that Opposition MPs in the Lok Sabha did not question the government as to who had made such a demand, or what the Law Commission had recommended. Or how the Amendment to this Section falls within the Constitutional limits, how it does not violate the rights of the individual as guaranteed in the Consti-

tution. Nor did the Opposition ask the government why it felt it unnecessary to do away with the compulsion for the government to produce a certificate. It is significant that in the "Notes on Clauses" added to the pro-

posed Amendment Clause 16 is not considered necessary to comment upon.

S Mulgaokar (*Indian Express* 22.11.86) has pointed out, in commenting on the Bill, that "The area of civil rights is

gradually diminishing. The tragedy is the feebleness of the voice of protest. Many people I would normally expect to be disturbed are bewitched into accepting that some curbs on our liberties are the price we

must pay to keep at bay the dangers that surround us."

The warning is being clearly sounded. The Lok Sabha ignored it. One hopes that the Rajya Sabha elders will take note, and action. □

Soli Sorabjee speaks out on the Postal Bill and National Anthem Judgement

Eminent lawyer and jurist Soli Sorabjee who was Attorney General from 1977-80, told the *Gazette* that the *Postal Bill* is a grave encroachment on the right of privacy.

Not only does the bill provide no safeguards, it also does not define the category of offences.

Under the bill action to intercept mail can be taken on mere suspicion of incitement to committing an offence. Mr. Sorabjee explained that the bill seeks to confer powers akin to search and seizure to executive officers without any judicial application of mind. He felt that power should be hedged with safeguards and the occasion of exercise of power should be conditioned by danger to the security of the nation.

National Anthem Case

Expressing his views on the National Anthem case, he felt that the Supreme Court judgement was legally sound and in tune with India's temperament of tolerance and accommodation of different views. Other significant points made by

Sorabjee:

- The right to speak also implies the right to remain silent.
 - By not singing the National Anthem because of religious beliefs, and not on account of objections to the Anthem itself, no disrespect is shown.
 - In its judgement the Supreme Court has accepted the principle, already established in 1954, that a secular judge cannot sit in judgement on the propriety of a religious belief. But when belief is converted to action, and public order, Morality and health are endangered, then the State can impose restraints.
 - There can be no compulsion to sing the Anthem so long as the act of not doing so, does not impinge on the security of the State, public order and morality. Sorabjee felt that India's integrity and security were sufficiently strong to be threatened by 3 school students.
- The former Attorney General felt that the controversy around the judgement had been blown up out of all proportion. The

reaction had been disproportionate, almost hysterical.

It will be recalled that the children Bijoe, Binu Mol and Bindu Emmanuel who belong to Jehovah's Witness "a religious movement founded in 1872 ... with no formal church organisation ... who avoid participation in secular government." They the children attend school. Daily during the morning assembly when the national anthem is sung they stand respectfully, but



they do not sing. They do not sing because it is against the tenets of their religious faith

... not the words or thoughts of the anthem but the singing of it ... This, they (and before them their elder sisters) have done all these several years. No one bothered. No one worried. No one thought it disrespectful or unpatriotic ... till July 1985 when some patriotic gentleman ... thought it was unpatriotic not to sing the national anthem" (Bijoe Emmanuel v/s State of Kerala SC 1986)

Thanks to the efforts of the above mentioned gentleman, 'national honour was preserved' and the children expelled from school. The children's father appealed to the High Court of Kerala where "first a learned single judge and then a division bench rejected the prayer of the children." The case went to the Supreme Court who reversed the judgement saying the High Court of Kerala had "misdirected itself and gone off at a tangent".

Carbide, Genocide, Cinema and Censor

Jaya Jaitly



On 3rd December 1986, in Bhopal and in many other parts of the country people observed the second anniversary of the world's biggest industrial disaster. The NO MORE HIROSHIMA — NO MORE BHO-PAL campaign committee had planned to screen a film titled BEYOND GENOCIDE in Bhopal as part of its programme on 3rd December 1986. But the film could not be screened.

This 80-minute documentary made by a group of India film-makers, Salim Shaikh, Suhasini Mulay and Tapan Bose with the help of the victims of the Bhopal tragedy has not yet been approved by the Central Board of Film Certification of the Government of India. Tapan Bose who was present at the mid-night meeting in Bhopal told the gathering that victims of the MIC explosion could not see the film as the Censor Board was worried that the film defamed the multinational corporation that caused the disaster in which thousands were killed and hundreds of thousands were crippled for life.

The situation in itself is unique. The very people who are the central theme of the film cannot see it because the government does not approve of such a film. Commenting on the situation Mr. B.K. Karanjia, editor of "Screen" said, "It was left to the medium of cinema to project more effectively than other media of communication

the full extent of the Bhopal tragedy, said to be the world's biggest industrial disaster, in a searing documentary whose impact is as immediate as it is devastating. And, predictably it was left to the Central Board of Film Certification to raise, in the guise of safeguarding morality, trifling and silly objections to granting the documentary the required certificate."

Under the law of the land no film can be screened publicly in the country unless it has been given a certificate by the Film Certification Board. Any violation of this law is punishable by three years' imprisonment and fine upto Rs. 20,000.00

The Censorship Act

Pre-censorship of Cinema was introduced in India by the British Government in the year 1914. The objective of the British government was to protect the interest of the Crown and prevent the expression of popular discontent through the medium of the cinema.

In other words the British rulers of India did not want this powerful form of mass-communication to become a source of inspiration for the anti-imperialist struggle in India. After India's independence a similar law for compulsory pre-censorship of Cinema was enacted by the Indian parliament in 1952. The act has been amended six times. The last amendment was enacted in 1981. It is interesting

to note that though the Government of India Act, 1935 had put censorship of cinema on the concurrent list, the 1950 constitution transferred it to the central list.

This act has been used again and again to force independent film-makers of this country of change the political and social content of their films. Documentary cinema is perhaps the greatest victim of this act.

Though India produces a large number of documentary films, most of these are sponsored by the government. The

government has treated documentary cinema only as an instrument of propaganda. As documentary film-makers make films under government contract they can hardly be expected to assert their right of freedom of expression in their own films. Whenever a film-maker had tried to be objective or truthful in their films, the Censor Board has sat upon the films for months and sometimes for years, forcing the film-maker finally to bow to the wishes of the Censor Board.

The independent documentary film movement is a recent phenomenon in this country. The very first film of this kind, K. Abbas's, "A Tale of Four Cities" was in suspension for almost 16 years and was finally cleared after a protracted legal battle that went up to the Supreme Court. The Hidayatullah judgement of 1969 in Abbas case had in fact become the basis for the last amendment of the Censorship Act. It provided, for the first time, some safeguards against constant government interference. There is nothing in the law which empowers the Censor Board to censor films for political reasons. But the Censor Board and the government have been constantly twisting the provisions of the law to suit their purpose. On several occasions the government has violated the law.

Passing The Buck

Censor application for the film BEYOND GENOCIDE was submitted in the last week of August 1986. According to the rules the Censor Board should have given a reply within 30 days. The film-makers have not received any formal reply from the Censor Board regarding the fate of their film till today. The film was viewed by the Examining Committee of the Censor Board on 29th August in Bombay. The Examining Committee did not pass the film. Under the law the Regional Censor Officer is required to report to the Chairman of the Board within three days of the viewing of the film by the Examining Committee. However, in this case the Censor Board took almost two months to arrive at the next step as prescribed in the law. The film was sent to the Revising Committee who saw it on 27th October '86. After the screening of the film on 27th October, the film-makers

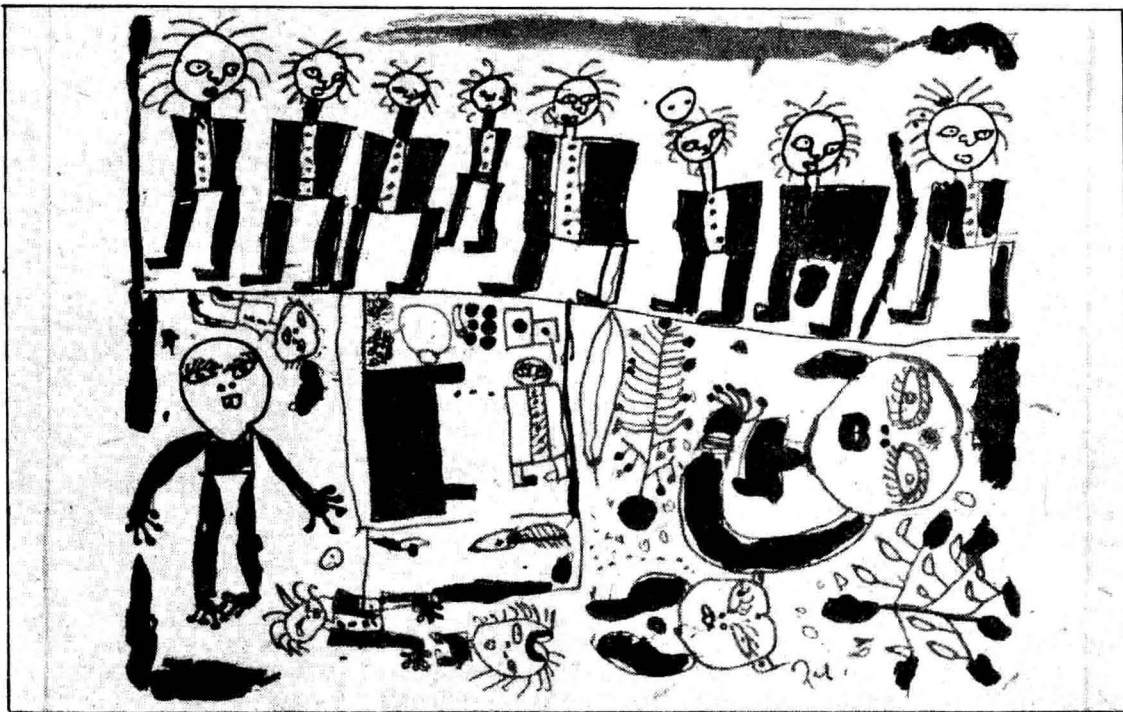
were told informally that there were six objections to the film.

The very first objection was to the title "BEYOND GENOCIDE". The word 'genocide' should be removed they were told. The Censor Board also objected to a portion of an interview given by a victim of the Bhopal disaster: He had said that Prime Minister, Mr. Rajiv Gandhi, during his visit to Bhopal had not gone inside the affected areas. Though the statement is factually correct, the victim apparently has no freedom of speech on the celluloid screen. Most of the objections raised by the Censor Board relate to such issues which are factually correct.

During the so called informal meeting the Chairman of the Censor Board offered to grant a "U" certificate to the film provided the film-makers accepted all the cuts. The film-makers declined.

Since then the Censor Board has refused to respond to all letters of the film-makers. The Censor Board now has an even better reason to hold on to the film. They have discovered that the Bhopal tragedy is "subjudice". They are worried that the film-makers may have committed contempt of court by making this film. When the film-makers offered to get independent legal opinion on the issue the Censor Board turned down their offer and preferred to send their file to the Central Government for legal opinion. The file has been lying with the Ministry of Human Resources for over a month. It is learnt that the Ministry of Human Resources has decided that the Ministry of Petroleum and Chemicals should also be consulted and have referred the case to them. This bureaucratic game of passing the buck can go on for ever. As this rate, the film-makers and the victims of the world's biggest industrial disaster will never be able to show their film to the citizens of this country. This is a violation of the peoples' right to know.

The film-makers have decided to appeal to the Bombay High Court. But how long will the people of this country be forced to run to the aid of the courts to exercise their rights guaranteed by the Constitution. How long can the courts uphold these rights when the government and the bureaucracy continue to violate these rights everyday?



Must 14 Million Children Die Each Year?

Harji Malik

As UNICEF (United Nations Children's Fund) celebrates its 40th birthday, on December 10th, its "State of the World's Children Report 1987" emphatically says "NO" to this question. The report states "that the lives of over four million children have already been saved in the last five years alone, by nations which have mobilised to put these low-cost solutions (low cost methods) of protecting child health at the disposal of the majority of their citizens". UNICEF Executive Director James Grant points out that the promotion of immunisation and oral rehydration therapy (ORT) alone, has saved the lives of 1.5 million children in 1986. Therefore, he goes on, "... it can no longer be seen as 'normal' for 4 million of the world's young children to die each year and for millions more to live on in malnutrition and ill-health."

Roughly more than a quarter of the problem of world poverty is in India. According to the Report "Whether the issue is diarrhoeal deaths on vaccine-preventable disease, low birth-weight or malnutrition, infant death or childhood disability, nearly 30 per cent and sometimes more of those affected live in India. So what happens to India's children contributes importantly to the world picture."

India's Record

Where are India's statistics? Figures which follow are from the UNICEF Report: India ranks 40th out of 130 nations in the "under 5 mortality rate". However, mortality rates show improvement. In 1960 the under 5 rate was 282 per 1000 live births, in 1985 it was 158. (Afghanistan has the highest figure at 329 and Sweden and Finland the lowest, with 8.) In 1960 71.8 per cent of children born in India survived, in 1985 the figure had risen to 84.2. Sweden's percentage was 99.2.

Take nutrition: 30 per cent of infants born in this country in 1982-83 had a low birth-weight. In contrast the figure for Egypt is only 7 per cent, but 50 per cent for Bangladesh, 25 for Sri Lanka. In 1980-84 the percentage of Indian children suffering from mild/moderate/severe malnutrition was 33/5 (UNICEF field office source), Bangladesh was 63/21, Pakistan 62/10.

According to official sources India's infant mortality rate has

dropped from 129 in 1971 to 104 in 1984. But, and this is a vital part of the scene, infant mortality in rural areas (114) is almost double the urban rate (65). In a section on India the Report gives some of the Government of India's goals for the year 2000, which UNICEF says are now practicable because of the system already operating. Take safe drinking water, crucial to any health programme: Between 1980-84 the number of

ascending curve for all immunisations.

The Report informs about India's plan for a district wise coverage to be completed by 1990. Last year the first 30 districts were covered thus increasing coverage to 60 per cent. The Report points out that the population of these 30 districts is almost as great as the combined populations of Turkey and Colombia! In 1986 an additional 60 districts will have

through polio alone.

Another shocking statistic is that more children have died of infection and malnutrition in India and Pakistan in the last two years than in all the 46 nations of Africa put together, and this in a period when drought and hunger have struck hard in Africa.

Rousing the international conscience UNICEF says "it makes no moral difference that these

points out "all developing nations can afford to implement and all industrialised nations can afford to support — even in such dark economic times."

India's Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) scheme comes in for special attention in the Report, which describes ICDS as a project which has "permanently and significantly affected the life" of the nation. Today ICDS involves over 200,000 people in promoting



A CHILD SURVIVAL REVOLUTION: Immunization and ORT — two of the least expensive of all child protection techniques — are together saving the lives of well over a million children each year and beginning to lead the way towards a revolution in child survival and development.

The State of the World's Children 1986, UNICEF

villages without safe water supply have been reduced from an estimated 230,000 to about 40,000. In 1983 UNICEF figures state that 54 per cent of the total population had access to safe water supply, the breakdown being 80 per cent of the urban population and only 47 per cent of the rural.

Having of infant deaths to 60 or less per 1000 live births, reducing the 30 per cent incidence of low-birth-weight, primary education for all are among other goals. UNICEF assistance in these plans lays special emphasis on immunisation, promotion of universal knowledge about diarrhoea management and ORT, and the prevention of malnutrition. The chart on progress and projection of immunisation in India from 1978 to 1990 shows a rapidly

been covered, and from next year to 1990 about 100 districts a year will "attempt to reach 85 per cent immunisation."

Communication and Publicity

Describing how every means of communication is being used to spread the message, the Report cites the publicity effort in the recent series of cricket test between India and Australia. Electronic scoreboards flashed the message "Protect your Child — Immunise" and billboards, 10 metres long around the ground carried the same message in English and Hindi to TV audiences throughout South Asia. The Report also highlights the tragic figure: *Every day in India more than 3000 children die of vaccine preventable disease and above 250 more are paralysed for life*

millions of children did not die in any particular place at any one particular time. But it does mean that their suffering cannot be framed in the viewfinder of a camera. And it does mean that their deaths are therefore not news, and that the world is not shamed into action on their behalf. Yet these victims of the silent emergency are just as dead. And the love and hopes of their families are just as surely turned to grief."

Informative Report

The extremely well brought out and informative report profiles programmes in several countries and sets out in detail information and methods of the low-cost programmes which have already sparked off the start of a "revolution in child survival" which as the Report

basic health care and pre-school education for the poorest 20 per cent of the nation's families. By 1990, 40 per cent of all deprived children should be covered. The Report states that according to independent studies malnutrition in ICDS areas has been found to be 60 per cent less than in other areas, infant mortality has been reduced to 9 per 1000, as against the national average of 114, and although ICDS only operates in poor areas, immunisation rates and school enrolment levels are usually higher, and drop-out rates lower than in non-ICDS areas. It is estimated that when the scheme does finally reach all the poor families in the country, it will still cost less than one per cent of the nation's gross domestic product.

THE STATE OF THE WORLD'S CHILDREN 1987

280,000 a week die in silent emergency.

PESTICIDES: THE HIDDEN THREAT

Amita Baviskar

Think of pesticides and you think of acrid clouds released by the malaria control vans, or of cockroaches in your kitchen, or of smiling farmers standing beside waving fields of wheat ripening in the sun. What you do not think of is the gradual and largely invisible poisoning of human beings and their environment by chemicals which, in any case, seem to be losing their effect.

Pesticide-spraying to control insect-borne diseases like malaria and filaria may no longer be achieving much by way of killing the disease-carriers. Insects are formidable adversaries and have the ability to adapt and become resistant to pesticides. The increased spraying of pesticides has little effect on them. As the number of species of pests resistant to pesticides has increased, so has the incidence of malaria and filaria. The situation is all the more serious as we are dealing with a 'supermosquito' which is unaffected by pesticides. Even though half our health budget is spent on malaria control, the strategy of pesticides use initially successful, is now failing and has led to the current resurgence of malaria in large parts of the country.

The increasing resistance of pests to pesticides has affected agriculture too. Farmers substitute stronger and more expensive poisons to try and control pests. As pests overcome the effects of the pesticide and become resistant, this process becomes a treadmill for the farmer who has to keep using more and more expensive pesticides. In large parts of India, farmers are finding it too costly to continue growing cotton as the pests became resistant and the treadmill of increasing costs sets in.

Besides affecting the farmer, the increased use of pesticides

hits the consumers too. Pesticides in amounts well above the prescribed safety limits are present in the food which reaches our local markets. Studies of milk products, cereals, fruit and vegetables sold in Bombay, Delhi and Hyderabad have detected dangerous levels of pesticides in a majority of the samples. These residues are deposited when pesticides are misused — either because of poverty and ignorance, or in response to consumers' preferences. Fruit and vegetables are often sprayed with pesticides for that glossy, blemish-free appearance which we find so attractive. A few spots on a fruit do not reduce its nutritive quality very much, but farmers know how finicky city dwellers go for cosmetic appeal.

Alarming Pesticide Accumulation in Body

Over a lifetime, increasing levels of pesticides accumulate in the body. These chemicals are extremely persistent and difficult to break down. Being highly poisonous even very small amounts of these chemicals represent a potential hazard. Cancer, deformities in unborn children, mutations and damage to genetic material are some of the more serious effects that these residues can cause. The results of some recent studies acquire alarming significance. *The DDT-level in the body fat of Delhi residents has been found to be as high as 26 parts per million, which is the highest in the world and well above the maximum residue limit of 1.25 parts per million.* Another study shows that the DDT and BHC residues in breast-milk are so high that babies ingest 21 times the acceptable daily intake prescribed by the World Health Organisation! This slow and invisible poisoning is all the more serious when we realise how little we know about it. Its effects can be

manifested over several generations. What we spray so unthinkingly today is an ever-increasing threat to our tomorrow.

When pesticides enter the environment they affect other species too — often with disastrous results. Pesticides kill birds, insects and animals beneficial to humans in diverse ways. Many pesticides, for example, are poisonous to bees. Pesticides disrupt nature's system of checks and balances, in which one species controls the population of another by preying on it or by competing with it for food or living space. Ironically, pesticides also kill the natural enemies of the pests which they are supposed to destroy, so the pests are freed of natural controls. Even when a pest is killed by the pesticide, its place may be taken by a previously innocuous pest which has been freed from such natural controls.

The concentration of pesticides in the bodies of animals increases as one goes up the



foodchain. While residue levels may have been too low to kill organisms lower down in the food chain, their cumulative effect may kill their predators. Reports from Punjab have shown that the use of pesticides may have led to the death of shikras (a kind of hawk). Pesticides have reduced the population of several birds species by inducing hormonal changes which make their egg shells too thin causing the eggs to break before hatching. The disappearance of the American bald eagle is a notorious example of this phenomenon, and similar results may be occurring in India, though there have been no studies on such impacts.

Lack of Awareness of Hazards

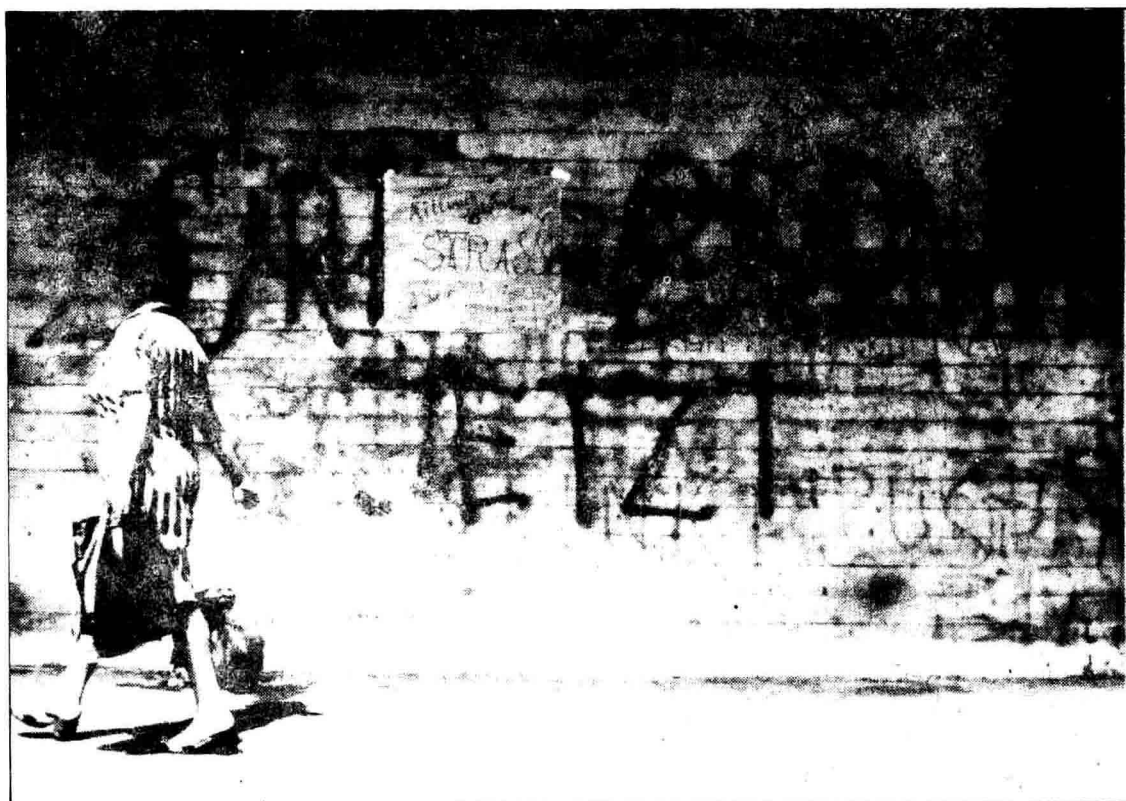
Who do pesticides wreak such havoc on the environment and on human health? The answer lies in the lack of awareness among pesticide users and apathy of governments and general public, which greatly enhances the inherent dangers of these toxic chemicals. Pesticides are produced and formulated in units where little or no care is taken to protect workers from exposure to highly toxic chemicals. The Santappa Commission in Tamil Nadu in its study of hazardous units reported that drums of pesticides lay in the open posing a serious health hazard. The unit employed mainly female labour which was not given protective clothing or periodic medical examinations. While handling and using pesticides, small farmers and agricultural labourers are not informed about the hazards of contact with pesticides or what precautions to take. Workers are too poor and unorganised to be able to afford or demand protective gear. The government has not done anything to educate the pesticide user or to enforce any kind of safety controls. The pesticide companies play a largely negative role by aggressively marketing pesticides without emphasising their hazards. They supposedly educated people rush to spray pes-

ticides on the slightest pretext — in the Indian Institute of Technology, Kanpur, pesticides are used to wipe tables in the canteen to keep flies away! In our homes we constantly use Flit or Baygon or other such pesticides even though safer methods are available. No wonder then that more than 10,000 people die in the Third World every year due to accidental pesticide poisoning and a lot of these cases occur in India.

The nastier side of pesticides cannot be shrugged off as the inevitable cost of an intrinsically useful product. It is well known that safe and practical alternatives to pesticides exist. A lot of these alternative techniques of pest control are simply plain common sense, or tried and tested traditional practices. The best way to control mosquitoes, for example, is to destroy their breeding places. Community efforts to improve sanitation and drainage have proven to be a resounding success in Pondicherry and Kheda (Gujarat), where incidence of malaria has declined sharply and pesticide use has been almost eliminated. Inside homes, using mosquito nets or neem leaves is safer and more effective than spraying pesticides. In agriculture too, a return to the healthier traditions of organic farming, along with the use of new and ecologically sound methods of integrated and pest management are an effective and sustainable solution to the pesticide problem. The need of the hour is a concerted campaign to make people aware of the hazards of pesticide use and to mobilize them into demanding a safer environment. All of us can do our bit, but only if we are willing to come out of our cocooned existence.

Note: This article is based on information obtained from a larger report on pesticides being prepared by KALPA-VRIKSH — a Delhi-based environmental action group. For further information contact author at 9D Maurice Nagar, Delhi - 110 007





A Still from 'Zurich Is Burning'

The Politics of Film

Report of a Seminar organised by the Max Mueller Bhawan

Srimati Lal

In a country where film is too often viewed as a hedonistic means of escape from real problems, more vital possibilities of the medium and its immense value as evidence and documentation of society have not yet been utilised or analysed in sufficient depth. There is too little scope for students interested in the academic study of film. In this area the cultural capital Calcutta has once again blazed a trail, with Jadavpur University inviting a 3 year post-graduate course in Film studies starting from this year and even Calcutta University with its ultra-conservative image soon to follow suit.

There is certainly a considerable interest in a more serious study of the medium. The Max Mueller Bhawan Delhi, recently hosted a worth while 4 days seminar on 'Film and Politics' from Oct. 25-28 in cooperation with the Federation of Film Societies of India, which covered five exhaustive sessions of screenings and discussions conducted by Dr. Bruno Fischli a film theorist from the University of Cologne, under the headings 'Film of the Student Movement', 'Worker Films', 'Political Thriller Films', 'Films and Politics' and 'New Forms for New Politics: Popular Movement Films'. This exposure and interaction made for an interesting forum where some valuable insights were exchanged.

As stated in the brochure provided to an invited audience, politics "provides a common area of discussion on the international front that is not available in most other areas of film-making." The seminar could not however provide a complete or comprehensive picture of all the work done in this genre. But its value lay in the fact that the focus was not on German films alone: relevant contributions from five different countries were screened. The works were presented within the framework of a historical perspective and

critical methodology, which made some amount of informed discussion possible.

Apart from significant German contributions, Govind Nihalani's 'Aghaat' Sukhdev's 'Thunder of Freedom', Anand Patwardhan's 'Bombay: Our City', Manjira Dutta's 'Raaste Bandh Hain Sub', the Argentine classic documentary 'Hour of the Furnaces' by the militant guerilla directors Solanas and Getino, Godard's 'Here and Elsewhere' and a Swiss videofilm 'Zurich Is Burning' were screened. leader of the Threavada school foreign films and information on them in the texts provided was, however, missed.

Among the documentaries on German student movements, the short 7-minute film 'Demonstrator's Self-Protection (1967) by Dietrich Schubert was most interesting in its sense of immediacy. According to the director, this "was made like a leaflet, in the course of one afternoon and night... during a sit-in demonstration, we were overcome by an oppressive feeling of anxiety on seeing hundreds of green-uniformed policemen marching upon us. This 'cinematographic leaflet' aims to help people overcome this kind of fear. (From the film information texts) The film 'Terror Even in the West' documents the Vietnam Congress in West Berlin in 1968 and an ensuing pogrom like counter-demonstration against protesting students, and 'The Break-up of All Days' deals with education values. These films of the late 60's as early protest documentaries, served to illustrate the first stage of an interaction between politics and the medium. A discussion on Agitation, Propaganda and Educational films followed, taking the above works as sample studies.

By whom for whom

The afternoon session proved even more interesting as Nihalani's recent 'Aghaat' was

screened, along with a similar German 'Worker-film', Ziewer's 'Snowdrops Blossom in September'.

A question was raised: who are such films by, and who are they for? Dr. Fischli was of the opinion that 'fictional' film narratives suffered from an inability to bring actual political change, their 'message' was, in effect, diluted. Such films, he felt, fell into the slot of 'entertainment' or 'escape'. This attitude raised much indignant protest from the audience. According to such logic, many significant works would indeed, then, be politically dismissable — for example, Eisenstein's 'Battleship Potemkin', the films of Chaplin, Wajda's 'Man of Marble' and 'Man of Iron' on Polish Solidarity, Alea's 'Memories of Underdevelopment', all of Fassbinder's works including the powerful films on racism, 'Fear Eats the Soul' and 'The Marriage of Maria Braun', the classic American expose of the corruption that was Watergate, 'All the President's Men', and strong feminist films such as Margarethe Von Trotta's 'Sisters'. And what of the films of Ritwick Ghatak, so deeply critical of religious fundamentalism and social inequality? The stance of the film auteur (author), if one of genuine conviction is certainly also an influential political entity, regardless of whether or not his or her film is 'fiction' or 'documentary'.

Nihalani and Semi-fictional Narrative

The fact that a 'semi-fictional' narrative can register protest and question the status-quo with considerable effect was well-illustrated by 'Aghaat' which seems to be Nihalani's best work to date, surpassing 'Aakrosh' and containing deeper insight than his recent satire on high-society intellectuals, 'Party'. It delineates typical infighting between rival union groups and

the ultimate fruitlessness of this kind of politics. Naseeruddin Shah, Om Puri, Deepa Sahi and others put in highly credible performances. 'Fictionalism' does tend to introduce a kind of self-consciousness and certain unavoidable elements of falseness, but sincere re-creations of real-life social problems certainly have a value for the public that cannot be so summarily dismissed.

Corrupt Political Thriller

Volker Schloendorff's 'Circle of Deceit' the story of a reporter covering events in Lebanon is, on the other hand a clearly 'corrupt' form of the political film. This has fast action as its priority, with politics as secondary, in the background.

The disadvantages of such 'political thrillers' that sensationalise and commercialise a political situation, are obvious. In sharp contrast to this was Sukhdev's intense 'Thunder of

was chosen by Dutta for her film because, she says, "the government has been shrieking about this being a 'model village'. Its problems have actually been forgotten. Yet, even a small co-operative of Harijan women here is viewed as a threat by the establishment." The film studies the historical background to such a situation with perception, and the fickleness of governmental philanthropy is exposed: here, rich to poor Harijans are all lumped together and treated 'equally'. Thus, under the guise of progress, it is the class system that is insidiously perpetuated.

The intention of such a film, says Dutta, is not some quixotic notion of perpetuating a revolution, but merely to ensure that "a more educated attitude is taken by the people. So that one may analytically perceive the reasons for the quiet violence and resentment that divides semi-feudal rural India." Imp-



Raaste Bandh Hain Sub: One of the citizens interviewed.

'Freedom' and Godard's scintillatingly creative documentary, 'Here and Elsewhere' Through such films one comes to understand that politics is not confined to the theme alone of a film, but literally 'surrounds' the film and the audience, and has a strong mediatory relationship between the film, its director and its viewer.

Another Highlight

Another highlights of the seminar was the first screening of 'Raaste Bandh Hain Sub' (All Roads Closed), a telling documentary on the backward and remote region of mountainous Jaunsar Bawar in U.P., by the young Delhi film-maker Manjira Dutta. This apparently 'unreachable' set-up, sunk deep in a tragic well of casteism, ignorance, blatant exploitation, bonded labour, oppressive religious practices and prostitution,

ressive both technically and in terms of its analysis, 'Raaste Bandh Hain Sub' is a film that deserves wide screening.

At the close of the session, 'Zurich Is Burning', an effective videofilm of youth unrest in Zurich, and 'Interim' a cinematic diary of an anti-nuclear movement in Gorleben, Germany from 1977 to 1984 were screened. The necessity for generating newer forms of popular movement films with low budgets, and creating new audiences, was perceptively discussed.

On the whole this was undeniably a valuable seminar. The inclusion of theoretical information on all the non-German films screened in the brochure that was distributed, and lengthier discussions on these films, would have made the effort even more worthwhile and instructive.

The Enemy Within

The Prime Minister inaugurated the Congress (I) campaign in Haryana on December 17, and the March elections in that state threaten to dominate political developments for the next three months, particularly in the northern states, including Punjab. With the immediate crisis in that state faced by the Barnala government averted, temporarily, and at a cost to the ruling Akali Dal which is still to be assessed, there is a general impression that no political initiative in Punjab will materialise. Discussing the possibility of release of the Jodhpur detenus, action against those guilty of the November 1984 anti-Sikh carnage, or of a dialogue with some extremist groups, the first essentials for any political solution, some serious "Punjab watchers" commented "Nothing will happen until March."

But the Punjab situation will not remain stationery. Nor will it improve miraculously. If anything, it will deteriorate and the terrorists will gain ground. Can we afford three months in limbo because the ruling party cannot risk losing the "Hindu vote"?

Once again the vicious nexus between religion and politics dominates the situation. Much has been written and voiced condemning the Akali Dal mixture of religion and politics as unacceptable in the modern context. In India's secular polity some of this criticism is justified. But while the Akalis proclaim the nexus openly, the Congress, particularly under Indira Gandhi's rule, practised and practises it covertly but always under the professions of secularism! So, between 1982-84 we had the solution to the accelerating Punjab crisis postponed time and again because of considerations of one election after another. To-day with the extension of Hindu revivalism all over the country, the covert nexus can have disastrous implications for the country's survival.

For let us make no mistake. Pakistan, super-power machinations or terrorism cannot destroy India. Anti-secular forces, fundamentalism in Hinduism, Islam, Sikhism, narrow regionalism and linguistic chauvinism, the enemy within, preaching intolerance and hatred, can. Exploited as they are, increasingly, by politicians motivated solely by power, these elements have already eaten into our structure.

Religious fundamentalism, because it arouses such passions, is the most dangerous and all three religions have been affected. But because the Hindus constitute the 80 per cent majority, Hindu fundamentalism and revivalism constitute the major threat. As Romesh Thapar says in "The Illustrated Weekly of India" (Dec. 7 1986) India is "a State held together until now by enlightened Hinduism", a historical fact which, unfortunately, is forgotten, or deliberately ignored, in the present climate of acrimony and recrimination plus insecurity of the minorities.

It is the responsibility of the enlightened Hindus to speak out against revivalism, against the trishul culture which is the antithesis of Hinduism, against the concept of the "Hindu state". By not doing so, by not condemning those who shout in strident terms that the minorities must learn to behave, who shout that Hinduism is in danger, these enlightened Hindus are guilty of the same crime of silence Sikhs are accused of when they do not continually raise their voices to condemn terrorism.

For Hindu intolerance is a bigger threat to the Indian state than Islamic revivalism or Sikh terrorism. And these, to a large extent, are triggered and fuelled by the assertiveness of the majority.

To survive India must remain secular, in the real sense, not the "phony" version we follow. Religion has no place in democratic politics, except from the ethical point of view. But instead of becoming more secular, we are steadily sliding backwards with revivalism rampant in every religion. The calls of Hinduism, Islam, the Panth in danger, mobilize all the forces of intolerance and reaction supported by politicians of all parties, and the voices of liberalization and reform are silenced, whether they are Sikh, Muslim or Hindu.

They must speak out with courage, in truth, if we are to survive as a nation. But the majority cannot escape its responsibility in setting the pattern. Time is running out and the destructive forces gaining strength. The next three months will, in a micro form, show us what lies in store. Which is of greatest import? A Congress government in Haryana? Or the integrity of India?

*"Behold Man, departing this world borne
on shoulders of four pall-bearers.*

*Farid, only the good deeds done in
this life stand by us in the next".*

Journalism of a

Patwant Singh

An even greater anger — which could have disastrous consequences if it continues to be ignored — is building up in Punjab against the killing of innocent Sikhs in simulated encounters. The news usually given after each such 'encounter' is that a police or para-military team was fired at by 'terrorists', and on returning the fire in self-defence, a number of them were killed. The correspondents file such stories, the editors accept them, and the newspapers feature them prominently. Seldom, if ever, do national dailies launch their own detailed investigation of such encounters.

Interestingly, *The Week*, published from Kerala, recently carried a two page story with four photographs, covering five such 'encounters', (September 7-13, 1986): 'Terrorist activity in Punjab, it wrote, 'has been in direct proportion to the police measures. Of the five terrorists of the 'A' category — on the most wanted list — killed in over one month, only one encounter, that of Dalbir Singh alias Billa, was a genuine one.'

So far as Billa was concerned, 'during the entire period he was whipping up mayhem, his father was not allowed to cultivate the farm. The CRPF, it is said, burnt his cattle fodder and carried away his tubewell's motor. Said his father: 'Earlier I had lost my son. In my lot has been left only the dust of my fields.'

The Week graphically described some of the killings. In the case of Geja Singh and Makhan Singh: Their arms were tied behind their backs, and they were brought to a raised site, which apparently was used as an open air interrogation centre. According to eyewitnesses, both were asked by the police who they were. They identified themselves. The security personnel asked Geja and Makhan to run — an offer which they refused. According to Mukhtiar Singh, a villager, the men insisted that they would neither run nor lie down on the ground and would prefer to die facing their captors. They were, however, made to walk and were accompanied some distance by a security personnel armed with a rifle. Then five shots rang out. And Geja fell in a heap. Next it was the turn of Makhan. He was hit in the leg and fell down. He got up again, limping. And then he was shot dead from point blank range' said Sukhwinder Singh, who was arrested and beaten up severely by the security personnel who mistook him for Tarsem Singh Kuhar, a dreaded terrorist, who has since been arrested.'

Another person, Baba Ranjit Singh, was, according to an eyewitness account in the same report, 'ordered to sit down, and then they forced him to lie with his face down on the ground. They shot him in the back.'

A very perceptive comment on this predatory policy — it is



impossible to tell whether it is a 'policy' or a case of the security forces taking the law in their own hands — was provided in the same story by an intelligence officer: 'There have been several fake encounters recently. Going by our past experience, one such fake encounter increases terrorism by one hundred per cent.'

Contrast this sober assessment with the attitude of New Delhi's mandarins. In a more recent 'encounter' on August 30, the Border Security Force gunned down 10 persons near Dera Baba Nanak. The bitter anger against these killings, and doubts about the circumstances in which they took place, led S.S. Barnala, the Chief Minister, to ask three ministerial colleagues to inquire into the events. This apparently so incensed the Home Ministry, that the Minister of State, Ghulam Nabi Azad, saw fit to make the preposterous statement that an enquiry would not be good for the morale of the forces!

Not a word about accountability, miscarriage of justice, right to trial, sanctity of life, due process of law, constitutional safeguards, human rights or, for that matter, the right to live. No, the concern was for the morale of the para-military forces! Nor for the morale — or the lives — of a proud people who form the majority in the State; who have refused to move en masse against the minority in their midst; who have kept their head in the most trying of circumstances. No, the concerns of New Delhi are for the morale of its forces.

Lack of Editorial objectivity

Were any editorials written to explain the political, legal, psychological and ethical issues involved in this case? Was it pointed out that no matter how serious the terrorist threat, there can be no justification for gunning down 10 persons whose identity was yet to be established? The circumstances of whose killing, moreover, had raised grave doubts in the minds of many people. Even if an enquiry had found nothing wrong with the BSF's action, the very fact of its being held would have assured Punjab's peasantry of New Delhi's responsiveness to its concerns. Surely, there is a need, isn't there, to reassure it; and to assuage its feelings?

Far from questioning the wisdom of the union government's unreasonable opposition to such an enquiry, *The Statesman* vented its anger on the Akalis (September 13, 1986). They were criticised for their 'increased intransigence', Barnala for his 'malleability' and 'impotence', and his ministerial colleague for 'intemperate fulmination' and for leading 'a fifth column in Punjab'. New Delhi was praised for its firmness.

The Indian Express equivocated. A yes-and-no editorial. It started on a thunderous note. 'The implicit suggestion that those responsible for the security of the border should put on kid gloves is unacceptable' (September 18, 1986). The point is well taken. But does our border security require all human checks and safeguards to be set aside and the trigger-happy amongst the security forces allowed to take the law in their own hands? Does it call for summary executions of criminals, misguided elements and innocents, alike?

On the subject of the Sikhs detained in Jodhpur — an injustice compounded by vicious and unsympathetic comments by some of the media — the editorial had a very sensible suggestion. 'More than two years have passed since they were apprehended, and those against whom cases cannot be made out deserve to be released.'

Ignored by both the editorials were the rumblings in rural Punjab: dangerous portents considering it is the peasantry which has provided the State its basic stability over these turbulent years. This omission has to be judged against the magnitude of the crisis facing the nation. Assuming, of course, the magnitude is understood by those who shape public opinion.

Double standards on Fundamentalism

Now for that epithet for all seasons: fundamentalism. It comes as no surprise in our present political and social environment that this word is so frequently and irresponsibly used to describe even legitimate Muslim and Sikh aspirations. With disregard for accuracy and applicability alike — especially deplorable in journalists who ought to know how to use words better — the public is invidiously conditioned to look at other communities with a jaundiced eye.

The question could well be asked: is it a fundamentalist position to demand the punishment of those who use their high political office to organise violence against the Muslims, and more recently the Sikhs? Whose hoodlums are assured safety from prosecution and deterrent punishment, because of the protection these politicians provide them with? Are demands for a greater share of river waters for a State, or for more autonomy, fundamental-

third kind-II

ist demands?

Demands for autonomy, of course, are deliberately labelled separatist, as in the case of the Anandpur Sahib Resolution, even though the chances are that ninety per cent of those who ranted against it, hadn't read it. But that didn't stop them from damning it as another fundamentalist manifesto.

Whilst even reasonable Sikh and Muslim concerns are dubbed fundamentalist, and given screaming headlines, the private militias now being raised across the country by Hindu fanatics have scarcely received notice in the national dailies. Nor have their activities been systematically exposed. Nor stringent punishment demanded against them as is done, for instance, in the case of the AISSF.

There are at least sixteen organisations actively involved in enrolling volunteers to 'protect the Hindu religion' from the 'infidels'. They are frenzied, fanatical, and militant, to the point of fantasising about an India free of other, lesser people. Many of their speeches, statements and oaths lead to doubts about their sanity. Though what cannot be overlooked — as our newspapers do — is that fringe groups like these eventually move centre-stage and destroy nations from within.

The sixteen whose activities are yet to be consistently covered by the papers are:

- Hindu Rashtriya Sangathan,
- Hindu Ekta Sangh,
- Hindu Suraksha Samiti,
- Hindu Manch,
- Indraprastha Vishwa Hindu Parishad,
- All-India Nationalist Hindu Forum,
- Vishwa Hindu Parishad,
- Sarvadeshik Arya Pratanidhi Sabha,
- Patit Pavan Sanghatana,
- Akhil Bharatiya Shiv Shakti Dal,
- Bajrang Dal,
- Shiv Sena,
- Valmiki Sena,
- RSS,
- Hindustan Hindu Manch,
- Hindu Commando Force.

With a mixed bag of followers ranging from students and other impressionable young men to hoodlums and local rowdies, it is not so much the followers as their leaderships which need meticulous coverage. Only then can a better idea be had of the extent to which the communal canker has reached into majority community.

Some of the 'leaders' are the usual motley collection of carpetbaggers, criminal charge-sheets, small-time crooks and musclemen. It is the others which should give thoughtful Indians something to think about. For, these include retired chief justices, judges, senior administrators, parliamentarians, legislators, industrialists, professionals and newspaper owners and editors. If such

men, with a lifetime's experience in roles which required wisdom, reason, balance and respect for moral and ethical values, feel it necessary to 'defend' over 600 million 'endangered' Hindus, then India is definitely headed for self-destruction, because a hundred and fifty million people of other faiths will neither accept the religious bigotry nor the militancy of the majority community.

Private Armies

The thrust of some of the well-known editors are, of course, deliberately and willfully communal. Being a party to the destruction of communal amity, they cannot be expected to crusade against these current trends. But even responsible segments of the national press have yet to explain to their readers how the antics of these revivalist groups, apprenticed to our new-wave criminal politics, could be disastrous for India. Except for stray reports, there has been no sustained coverage to jolt people into an awareness of this threat to national unity posed by these crazed men. The little which has appeared only confirms the need for more intensive reporting.

Sunday, published weekly from Calcutta, carried a four-page report, 'Religion on the March', (August 24-30, 1986). This is how the story opened. 'The new godfather of the militant trishul-dhari Hindus is Veerendra Sharma, a man who is prepared to rally around his fanatical men to defend their sacred Hindustan from the "infidels". He is listed as a "bad character" in the police records with a 12-year prison term and 27 criminal charges, including that of murder against him. Sharma is also an associate of H.K.L. Bhagat, the Union Minister of Parliamentary Affairs.'

Quoted in the same report is Pradeep Kumar, of the Hindu Manch, who says: 'The enemies of Hinduism are Islam, Christianity, communalism and extremism'. Obviously, Kumar doesn't see himself as an extremist, even though he looks on India's 100 million people of Islamic faith as 'enemies'.

A recent issue of *The Indian Express* (September 16, 1986) had a story too, 'Private Armies a Threat to Peace'. Written by one of its bright young reporters, Ashwini Sarin, it included an interview with a Mr. Sharma, possibly the same one who figured in *Sunday*. This man also heads a militant group in the national capital, reputedly 'one of the largest', (it claims a membership of 15,000). He has served a 12-year term for murder. When asked about it, he said: 'That was committed in a fit of rage during a fight for control of a local club. Any one can get angry in one's youth. That doesn't make one a criminal'. There were several such interviews in both the publica-

But where were Girilal Jain and *The Times of India* all this while?

Aren't these militias, with their cut-throats, psychopathic killers and political dons, newsworthy? Jain has been in Punjab, where else? He is nothing if not consistent. Naturally, he wouldn't go to Punjab in person, but in terms of his personal obsession he has been there all the time. Not overly concerned with fundamentalists in the Hindu community, he had a four column report on the front page of his paper on September 16, 1986. 'Preachers of Fundamentalism', read the heavy bold types, and it was a news item covering a meeting in Sirhind of 'Sikh scholars, politicians and preachers'.

According to the report: 'Even such scholars as claim to be moderates, did not lag behind others in sharply criticising the Union Government.' And more of such stuff. All of its designed to stir things up since the conference itself was hardly the kind to rate four columns on the front page. No big names to hit at, no shattering pronouncements with which to shock the righteous. But then *The Times of India* has its own policy for Punjab.

The crisis of communications has taken Punjab, and with it the nation, to the edge of an abyss. As the 20th century witnesses amazing achievements everywhere in the field of communications, in India communications between her 750 million people remain carefully controlled. The central government's unrelenting hold over radio and television ensures that these two powerful mediums function only as departments of the government. As for the press, some of the communally disposed editors of the national dailies have made certain their personal predispositions are not subordinated to any vaguely idealistic view of their higher calling. Objectivity as a virtue has not rated high with them.

In the end result, instead of exposing the communal card with which the ruling party was planning to win the '84 elections, influential sections of the press lent their support to the subterfuge. They first villified whole communities with outright lies and half truths, then prevented readers from knowing the views of those defamed and slandered. They worked for an ill-informed and biased public opinion, instead of an integrated and enduring social order. They have had a major hand in creating the communal divide which now bedevils the country.

A large number of studies and books will doubtless be commissioned in the years to come to document in detail the role different individuals and institutions played during the turbulent years of the Punjab crisis. A great deal of material will be uncovered, assembled and related to events so that coming generations, as well as future chroniclers, can judge with what little wisdom journalists of the third kind conducted themselves at a critical time in the country's history.

(Concluded)

*Courtesy SEMINAR

QUESTIONS ON CULTURE

Jaya Jaitly

A National Cultural Festival was held in Delhi from November 8th to 23rd by the National Festival Directorate.

About 5000 artists and artisans were expected to participate in a programme costing a minimum of Rs. 6 crores according to official estimates.

This is to urgently recommend that before cultural zones and festivals are further activated our country should involve itself in a widespread debate in order to ensure that our cultural ethos and development is not "organised", institutionalised distorted and destroyed by the concepts and ideas of a small coterie no matter how well meaning or high up in the social and political ladder.

Capturing and recreating an Indian way of life must be done by people's institutions at the local level in each state and cannot be achieved in a 2 week show at Delhi where the weather, language and camp conditions of living are alien to the participating artists.

The State and Culture

Certain points of paramount importance should serve as the anchor sheet of any further thinking on culture. *The first is the nature of the State's relationship to culture.* When society itself sponsors culture, it has a participative and spontaneous warmth and is sustained through the mobilisation of people and resources from within the society or community. This happens in festivals such as GURPURAB, Baishakhi, Ramlila, Navratri, Onam, Moharram, Id, Ganesh Utsav and others. Whenever the State has undertaken control of sponsorship the indigenous ingredients of the festival are distanced from the people. This has happened at Nauchandi, Tarnetar, Pushkar, Kumbh and the Bastar Mahai, just to give a few examples.

The State should, therefore, instead of holding and organising "festivals" only assist indirectly by nurturing a *decentralised process* that sustains the rediscovery and supportive process in the regions where the cultural manifestations exist or existed. The substance of music, theatre, dance and ritual is related to seasonal, religious and community compulsions. Similarly crafts are sustained by a closely related way of life. These are not merely leisure time activities or entertainment, which is what they will become if transported without a purpose out of their sustaining environment.

Private cultural establishments should be assisted in order to stabilize and improve the status of local artists amongst those who, historically have evolved out of it. These cultural events must be enriched locally before being "brought" to Delhi. How can Delhi events provide a "crucial direction" when the holding of gala sports events like the Asiad in Delhi provided

no special direction to sport development? A news item about efforts to revive temple art in Kottayam, Kerala shows the springing up of local initiatives based on local conditions. Institutions such as these could not have to run from pillar to post for funds to revive dying arts and crafts while State run institutions headed by bureaucrats spring up and concentrate their first efforts on entertainment festivals far from their original environment. Work for the sustenance and propagation of culture must be born out of sound experience and must have as its base a *proper study of existing institutions*, and their work. In the past years, the Sahitya Akademi, Lalit Kala Akademi, Natya Sangeet Akademi, Kala Kendras and museums have been in existence. Their use, their achievements, their role and their genuine problems must be studied before setting up new structures. Parallel experiences in other fields must be assessed realistically and with a sense of responsible accountability. Massive institutional structures and hardware was created for the Asiad held in New Delhi, which did not yield, four years later in Seoul any expected or satisfactory result in the world of sport in India. *The true cultural community of India*, invisible and unacknowledged as it is, must be associated with decisions before adhoc committees are further allowed to "institutionalise" culture.

Culture and Development Policies

For any work to be meaningful and effective it must exist with a sustainable system which necessitates its close *relationship and relevance to overall development policies*. Crafts for instance cannot be assessed in terms of their marketability alone. In urban areas, out of context, they can become exotic looking commodities for those who live with cosmopolitan life styles and influences. A cultural policy cannot be therefore disengaged from environmental, economic, industrial and agricultural policies. As soon as there is a conflict, the environment in which indigenous regional or traditional cultural patterns flourish, will be destroyed. "Culture" promoted in isolation will become only exotica for display. This is purely a western concept which will not strengthen the roots of an Indian way of life.

Those truly concerned with the multifaceted cultures that make up the rich heritage of India should join this call for the prevention of public money being spent on adhoc ventures and channelise their ideas and concerns towards pressing for the above mentioned recommendations and creating and participating in a genuine people's movement to honour and serve their heritage as they see it.

Nandy Singh Reminsces on the Good Old Days of Indian Hockey



Nandi with Mary D'Souza of 100, 200 m fame in Helsinki

"I don't foresee a gold medal in any Olympic discipline for years to come", commented former hockey Olympian Grahnanandan Singh, popularly known as 'Nandy' Singh.

Sixty one year old Nandy, who represented the country playing right-in, in the 1948 and 1952 Olympics retired from the Navy in 1974 to join the Sports Authority of India as their administrator for the National Stadium, Delhi.

Upon superannuation, he recently quit his post. Relaxing on a sofa in his make-shift office in his Defence colony residence, he spoke to the Gazette about his career and his post-retirement association with the game.

Excerpts from the interview

How did you take to the game?

It was in the family. My father Sardar Tara Singh played it at the college level, though I don't know how good he was. I got started from my childhood in Lahore when he was the Divisional Inspector of Schools. We then shifted to Lyallpur, which was considered to be the granary of hockey in undivided Punjab. I took it to because during our days there as a lot of 'halo' around top players like Roop Singh of Gwalior, Peenniger from the North western Railway, Dhyani Chand, Jhaffar Ali Shah from Lahore. Seeing them play I also decided that I wanted to be a world champion and done the national colours. During those days even donning the university colours was considered a great honour, leave alone the national colours. Sportsmen were considered heroes, because getting the university colours was not so easy as it is today. Selection was very strict.

Moreover, when we shifted to Calcutta, after partition, I had

already excelled at the university level and was selected to play for Bengal in 1948. I had been working for the Punjab National Bank but had later shifted to the Calcutta Port Commissioners. Then the big break came later in 1948 when I was selected to play in the London Olympics.

As a Sportsman, what were the facilities you had during those days?

We got the barest minimum. All we were provided with was a ball. All the rest had to be managed on our own. No one had ever heard of a 'diet' during those days. But you see, it was sheer love for the game and an urge to excel in it. All the rest came later. But economically speaking, there was an incentive from ardent patrons like the Maharajas of Patiala, Gwalior, etc.

How do you see it today?

Now-a-days the facilities are excellent but the personal incentives are lacking. We lost out other nation-building activities, after partition, may be because we were consolidating with sports getting low priority. We kept up the winning spree till 1956 by sheer momentum of our players who were trained by the old-guard. The actual fall in our supremacy began after 1960, primarily because a lot of migration took place, with most of the Anglo-Indians like Dickey Carr, Tapsell, Hodges, Glacken, Reggi Rodricks, leaving. The royal patronage also disappeared and most of the players felt that they had been orphaned, with hardly any one left to look after them and provide them jobs.

Why was it that in the past most players hailed from Punjab or were either Anglo-Indians or Muslims?

If you see the 'hockey belt', you'll find that hockey is popularly played in Northern India,



Nandi with (left) R.S. Gentle and (right) Keshav Dutt in Helsinki, 1952

Central India, including Calcutta and Bombay. Most of the other parts are soccer-playing. This probably happened because of the cantonments in these regions where hockey was imported from England. So, wherever there was a concentration of cantonments, hockey became popular with the local population.

But why was it that hockey became the sport of the Sikhs. In fact it became synonymous with them?

(Thinks) I think because of the body-contact which is vital to the game. Sikhs from Punjab, due to historical reasons, have been a study people and a fighting force for the country. Hockey demands strength and artistry, and hence it became popular among them. It has become a kind of tradition; with the game being played in every nook and corner of the state. No sooner

did a child begin to walk that he was given a stick. Its like cricket now.

Coming back to you, how did you manage to play while in the Navy?

I joined the Navy to see the world, (smiles) and I more or less achieved that ambition. Even though, because of my background I was kept mostly in Bombay or some other shore station, when I assumed command, I managed to carry the entire team along with me.

I remember an interesting event. It was the Commonwealth Navies Meet which was held at Trincomalee in Sri Lanka. The climax of the sea exercises used to be an Indo-Pak match. We used to eagerly look forward to it, and almost every year the honours kept changing hands, though ultimately I think we won more matches than they did.

Which has been your greatest moment in hockey?

When we won the title for the second consecutive time in the '52 Olympics. I had played for both the teams, and when we stood on the winning rostrum,

tever is left lacks sports awareness. We prefer our children to join a commercial company than become athletes. In hockey, there is a virtual starvation of players, primarily due to lack of interest. While we have lagged behind, others have come up with new techniques which are akin to football techniques. We are still playing the 5-3-2-1 combination as opposed to the modern formation's of 3-5-2-1 or 4-4-2-1 as in football. In addition, the turf has played a vital part in revolutionising the game from speed, stamina and tactics to fine dribbling and artistry. In India we lack synthetic turfs.

There is also the factor of incentives. If hockey gets the same privileges as cricket, the game will get boost. Money needs to be pumped into the game if it is to survive.

What do you suggest should be done?

We should import at least 14-15 synthetic turfs for hockey playing areas like Punjab, UP, MP and Haryana. Secondly tournaments should be organised starting from the block level to district level to state level and

endup at the national level for school-going children below 12 years. After selection they should be given state scholarships and provided with expert coaching.

Moreover, we must have more community centre grounds which would enable 'mohalla clubs' to be formed. Even the help of retired sportsmen can be taken for such endeavours. And most important of all, the sports bodies must fix responsibility. If there is something wrong then the concerned officials should be held responsible. Not like the Seoul Asiad debate where inspite of the poor performance, no heads have rolled so far.

And lastly, do you foresee an Indian Gold medal in the near future?

No, I don't foresee a gold medal in any olympic discipline for years to come.

Lakhinder Vohra

PUNJABIAT STRUGGLES TO SURVIVE

Gazette News Service

Bhagwant Singh Dilawri accompanied Baba Amte on his three Punjab tours to villages in the border districts. These comments by him were made before the bus killings in Hoshiarpur.

Bhagwant Singh Dilawri told the *Gazette* that on Baba Amte's last visit to the Punjab a few weeks ago he sensed a change in the mood of the people. They were more relaxed, and when the Baba's party visited villages like Fatehabad and Fatehgarh Churian, from which there had been considerable migration earlier in the summer, they found that people had returned to their homes. Shops and businesses had reopened and life was back to normal. The improved conditions did not mean, however, that the communal divide was not there. Mr Dilawri stressed that while individual Hindu-Sikh amity has withstood the tensions and strains of the situation, the Hindu-Sikh divide, when it came to political issues, was as complete as before. In Chandigarh, for instance, where a joint meeting had been arranged, no calm discussion was possible and opinion was divided, even in the Peace Committee itself.

Unanimity About Jodhpur Detenus

Wherever the Amte party met and talked with Hindus and Sikhs, there was a unanim-

ous sentiment that the government must talk with the Jodhpur detenus. This was felt to be a priority. Mr Dilawri was struck by the number of Hindus who urged this. Even Vijay Kumar, of Jullundar's *Hind Samachar*, agreed, not through any sympathy for the detenus, but because he too appears to have come to the conclusion that without such a dialogue no end to the problem is possible. The Hindu sarpanch of Malikwal Pind, Mr Vishnu Kumar and his friend, Master Krishan Kumar Sharma, questioned how such talks or releasing the detenus would help the extremists. Even if a few of those released joined the extremists, it would make little difference, they pointed out, while if a dialogue and release helped to heal the hurt of the Sikhs, especially the youngsters, it could have great benefits.

Youngsters Refuse to Talk

Previously, when Amte travelled in Punjab, the youth groups were willing to talk to him and he had frank discussions with them in Amritsar. During this visit the group noticed a major change in attitude. The youngsters avoided any meetings with Baba Amte. When he camped in one of the extremist centres, in a dera near Gurudwara Khadur Sahib, he hoped to contact some young men. But they refused to meet him. Mr Dilawri felt this might be explained by a certain disappointment they suffered

when nothing came of their previous talks. They had obviously hoped Baba would be able to explain their views to New Delhi. Dilawri He told the *Gazette* frankly that on this visit, while people were cooperative and friendly, they failed to extend the same enthusiastic welcome to Baba Amte as had marked the previous occasions. The hope generated by the earlier visits had been belied by the government's failure to appreciate the Amte suggestions for helping towards solving the problem.

What is perhaps equally disturbing is the fact that on his return from Punjab this time, Baba Amte was not able to meet the Prime Minister to pass on his on-the-spot assessment of this critical situation although the party had occasion to tour all four border districts.

No Positive Reporting

In Mr Dilawri's view incidents which illustrate the strong sense of communal harmony which survives in spite of everything, fail to be reported. While incidents of terrorist killing make immediate headlines. The Amte party chanced on many instances which, if reported in the press, would have a healthy impact on the public. In Mukhtsar the group visited the widow of a Dr Katyal who was one of those killed in the bus. The door was opened by a Sikh called Ram Singh and when

Baba asked the widow whether she was in need of anything for herself or her children, she replied, simply, that her brother, Ram Singh, was looking after her, had moved in for her protection and that of her children, and she needed nothing. In Malla Pind when the terrorists came, Mangal Singh saved a Hindu pandit by shooting at them, with his licensed gun. In Ludhiana, the aged father of Jagdish Kakkar, killed by terrorists on the night of October 31 — Jagdish was the only son — told Baba Amte how the Sikhs in the neighbourhood were like his brothers, and hardly any of them had celebrated Diwali this year, out of sympathy for him.

What Fuels The Terrorists

In Shahpur Guraya, Gurdaspur District, Mr Dilawri and others met two young Sikhs who had returned from Pakistan. They explained that they had run away during Operation Woodrose for fear of death, and had crossed the border quietly only two to three months ago when they heard that the government was willing to take youngsters like them back into the mainstream. But they told the Amte group that they had been unable to find work of any kind, and had nothing to do. On the other hand, whenever there was any incident in the area, the police called them in for questioning, and this kind of harassment was upsetting them. If we find

nothing here, they explained, then we might as well go back. This sort of situation disturbed Mr Dilawri greatly and he told the *Gazette* that there is a general feeling among the Sikhs, that while it is true that the terrorists are harming Sikh interests, at the same time there is a feeling of frustration because their young sons have no opportunities for work, and this leads to an anger and resentment which surfaces at time in action by young people aimed at calling attention to themselves, no matter what the consequences.

A young girl student at Punjab Agricultural University in Ludhiana expressed what Mr Dilawri feels is at the heart of the situation. She said that the authorities do not understand the psychology of extremism in Punjab. The root cause is the "Zoolam" of the government, but even now the government does not understand the implications of Operation Bluestar as far as the sentiments of the Sikhs are concerned. They have no concept of the hurt of the non-Khalistani Sikhs. It is this deep hurt and humiliation, Mr Dilawri agreed, which the "boys" cannot forget. This is the base which is fuelling the terrorists and until it is removed, the terrorists will not be isolated. So, while those who kill innocent people must be dealt with in the harshest terms, this base must also be attacked.

Youth Complaints

Asked HOW this could be tackled, Mr Dilawri listed the complaints of the youth. 1) the

Continued on page 15

Tohra Triumphant in SGPC Poll

From Harbir Singh Bhanwer in Amritsar

The ruling Akali Dal in Punjab suffered a big jolt, when its candidate, Mr Kabul Singh lost to Mr Gurcharan Singh Tohra, candidate of the breakaway Akali Dal in the crucial S.G.P.C. President's election on November 30 by a margin of 16 votes. The result is bound to have far-reaching effects in Sikh politics and the politics of the Punjab.

The election held by secret ballot in Teja Singh Samundari Hall overlooking the Golden Temple, was widely interpreted as 'motion of no-confidence' against the Barnala ministry.

The ruling party conceded its defeat by not contesting the posts of Senior Vice-President, Junior Vice-President and General Secretary. The all executive members, however, were elected unanimously, 5 seats going to the ruling Akali Dal and 6 to the breakaway party.

The "United" Akali Dal led by Baba Joginder Singh and Mr Jagdev Singh Talwandi extended their full cooperation to the breakaway Akali Dal led by Mr. Prakash Singh Badal.

The main reason for the "humiliating" defeat of the ruling Akali Dal led by Mr Surjit Singh Barnala, was that its members cast their votes in

favour of Mr Tohra. Education Minister, Mr Basant Singh Khalsa, who happens to be a member of the S.G.P.C. had openly given a call for "conscience vote" in the SGPC poll. The Minister of State for Industrial Training, Mr Nirmal Singh Kahlon had also reportedly worked for Mr Tohra. Several other Ministers, known as 'Mr Tohra's men' had been making efforts to make Mr Tohra "consensus" candidate of both the parties. "Mr Khalsa and Mr Kahlon were later dismissed by the State Governor, Mr S.S. Ray on the advice of the Chief Minister. This action caused further ripples in the ruling party.

The atmosphere was surcharged in the Golden Temple Complex before the election. A vast crowd of the militant youths belonging to the breakaway Akali Dal, United Akali Dal, All-India Sikh Students Federation and Damdami Tak-sal occupied all vantage positions in Guru Nanak Niwas and Serai Guru Ramdass, near the venue of the election. They jeered and hurled abusive remarks at the ruling party members, and kept on shouting anti-Barnala sloganse. There were no counter slogans from the supporters of the ruling party.

The police and paramilitary forces took up positions on the road separating the SGPC complex from the main Golden Temple to ensure the safety of the ruling party members and to avoid any untoward incident. Senior officers of both forces and the civil service officers personally supervised the situation till the poll was over. Earlier, before their entry, some members of the Barnala Government, including Mr Hari Singh Zira, Mr Tara Singh Lyal-puri, Mr Jagdev Singh Tajpuri and Mr Surinder Singh Dhuri, the Parliamentary Secretary (a nephew of Sant Harchand Singh Longowal) were manhandled and pushed back by the militants. The turban of Mr Dhuri was seen flying.

Resolutions Adopted

Soon after the election, the members belonging to the ruling party left the Samundari Hall. The general house of the SGPC consisting of mainly the breakaway Akali Dal and the United Akali Dal adopted resolutions condemning the police action in the Golden Temple Complex on April 30 last following the announcement made by the 5-member Panthic Committee regarding the establishment of "Khalistan", and seek-

ing the resignations of two high priests (who were present in the house). Mr Tohra also announced the disbanding of the Task Force of the SGPC, consisting of ex-servicemen and army deserters, which came into exist-



Gurcharan Singh Tohra — a question mark in Punjab's politics and Sikh Religious affairs.

tence after the police action.

Talking to newsmen immediately after the election, a jubilant Mr Badal demanded the resignation of Mr Barnala from the Chief Ministership as he has no moral right to stay in the office after the verdict against him. Mr Barnala, however, refused to oblige him saying, "We are answerable to the legislative wing. The SGPC is a religious body. The outcome of today's result had nothing to do with quitting". The demand is irrelevant, he added. Mr Barnala admitted cross-voting by his party members.

Mr Barnala said that the members who had participated in the annual election of the SGPC, were elected on tickets distributed in 1978 by then party President, Mr Jagdev Singh Talwandi, Mr Tohra and Mr Badal, who was then Chief Minister of Punjab. He claimed that the outcome of the results was in fact "our victory as we had fought against the combined forces led by Mr Badal, Mr Talwandi, Baba Joginder Singh and the militants. Despite this opposition Mr Kabul Singh secured 58 votes against 74 by Mr Tohra".

Mr Amarinder Singh, leader of the legislative wing of the break-away Akali Dal, who was also present in Amritsar, told newsmen that his party would bring a no-confidence motion against Mr Barnala in the forthcoming session of the Punjab Assembly.

Five days of Grace

Saadat Hasan Manto
Translated from Urdu by Avtar Singh Judge



Beyond the Jammu plateau on the way to Kashmir, not far from Kud is the small village of Batot, a delightful place with a sanatorium for tubercular patients. The place is not new to me. About eight years ago I stayed there for three months.

Some months ago I revisited the sanatorium to see Padma, the wife of a friend, living out her last days there. My arrival coincided with the passing away of a patient, then of a second and a third. Maybe it was sheer coincidence that in that short span of four days three patients died, one after the other. Whenever a patient was removed from his bed, the loud lamenting of his near and dear ones pierced the veil of silence for a while, after which a strange gloom would again settle over the sanatorium. Desperately clinging to the thin thread of hope, the other patients found them-

selves slipping into the deepest pessimism. Padma, in particular, suffered this trauma. The shadow of death quivered on her lips, and her sunken eyes had a questioning look, as if she was crying in protest No.!

With the death of the third patient I kept thinking of the perennial cycle of life and death. It seemed to me that the sanatorium was a jar in which the patients were immersed like onions in vinegar. Each time the fork came down, it picked and carried away the one that was fully soaked. A cruel analogy, but one which kept returning to me.

One day when I entered the ward I heard a voice behind me. "Have you performed the last rites of number twenty-two?" I turned around to see a pair of dark eyes, bright with life, smiling at me from a spotless white bed. They belonged to a Bengali woman who, along

with others, was waiting for her turn to die, but with a difference, as I discovered later.

Her question evoked a strange emotion in me, the feeling that we had buried not a human being, but a number. To be frank, while the body was lowered into the grave, it had never crossed my mind that we were burying a man whose death was an irreparable loss.

I sat down to talk with the woman. In spite of her terrible affliction her dark eyes had not lost their lustre. "I am number four", she said, smoothing the folds from her sheet with her feeble hands. She added, "I have noticed that you take a lot of interest in the last rites of the dead." I could only mumble vaguely in response. And that was the end of our conversation that day.

The following morning I went out for a stroll as usual. A little drizzle the previous night and

imbued nature with an air of freshness and innocence, washed free of the 'treachery' of the patients who breathed their germs into it. The tall teak trees, the hills cloaked in blue mist, the rocks scattered around, with the small but healthy mountain buffaloes grazing in the distance, presented a scene of surpassing beauty.

Returning to the sanatorium in the evening, I could see from the expression of the patients that another one, a 'number', had gone. It was Padma. Her eyes which had not been closed, still had the same questioning look.

The day, persistent rain made it difficult for us to gather dry fuel for the cremation. Somehow the job was finally accomplished and the body given over to the flames.

Leaving my friend still gazing at the pyre I returned to the sanatorium to pack up our

belongings.

As I entered the ward I heard the now familiar voice of the Bengali woman, "It seems you have taken a long time."

"Yes," I replied, "because of the search for dry wood."

"Is it true that, unlike in other such places, there is no fuel shop here and that you have to make your own arrangements?"

I nodded briefly in assent.

"Won't you sit down?" she said.

With another nod, I perched myself on a stool by her bed. I had hardly done so when she shot another question at me, "Did you feel happy when you found the dry wood you were looking for?" Without waiting for my reply, she asked with her bright eyes fixed on me, "What is your opinion about death?"

"To me it is an enigma," I confessed. She gave me an understanding smile and continued in a almost childlike

manner, "I think I have understood it a little. For I have seen innumerable deaths. You might not perhaps witness as many even if you live for a thousand years. I am from Bengal. You must know of the famine there these days. And you must be aware that lakhs of people have already lost their lives. The famine has inspired hundreds of stories and articles. But they say nobody has been able to paint a true picture of the magnitude of human sufferings." She went on, "In this dreary atmosphere of death let loose, I have often pondered long over this." "So, how do you look at it now?" I asked, she continued in the same manner, "I think the death of an individual alone has a meaning, if any. The death of millions seems a joke. Believe me, the terror I once had of death is no more. When you have to stumble on a dead body at every step, death loses its horror. To me the very fact of so many people together seems absurd and foolish."

"Whose foolishness?" I asked. "I don't know", was her reply. But it is absolutely absurd, and seems extremely foolish. You throw a bomb on a living city and people die, poison the drinking water, and anyone quenching his thirst lives no more. This famine, war, disease — the death they bring is purely accidental, like a man buried in a house collapse. Real death is something different. It occurs when you are denied the most vital needs for your being.

"It is easy to get rid of a man, but it is difficult to kill those elements which sustain his being," she added after a pause. "My ideas were not always like that. I never thought of these things before, perhaps I had not the competence. This famine threw me into a new world, she suddenly stopped and fixed her gaze on me. Listening to her I had started scribbling some notes in my diary."

"What are you writing?" "I am a story-writer. And I take down anything that interests me," I told her frankly. "Oh, then I must tell you everything!"

For three hours she kept relating her story in her feeble voice, which I am now retelling in my own words.

Bengal was in the grip of famine. When starvation became unbearable for Sakina's uncle, he sold her to an infamous character for five hundred rupees. She was brought to Lahore, where her owner lodged her in a hotel in the hope of making money off her. Sakina's first customer was a handsome young man.

What an irony! When she had been free, she had often dreamt of such a man for her husband. But now it was different. The very idea of yielding her body to him was repulsive.

Even before she was dragged down to these depths, she had expected all this to happen. An intelligent girl, she had known it was only a question of time, before she became a token of currency to be cashed everywhere. Like a condemned person she had still hoped for some miracle to happen. Which, however, never did.

Somehow gathering courage and using her wits, and the

ignorance of the young man, that same night she succeeded in breaking away from her bondage.

She was soon wandering all alone on the wide roads of Lahore, with dangers lurking at every step. Greedy looks from a passersby greeted her everywhere. Unlike worldly possessions her youth was something impossible to conceal. She was afraid to stretch her hand out for charity, lest someone grab it and drag her into some dark place.

She looked greedily at the sweetmeats neatly arranged in the shops and at people devouring food in restaurants. There was not a bite for her, unfortunate creature that she was.

For the first time in her life she realised the value of food. There was a time when food had been brought to her, but now she was trying in vain to get it. Four days of starvation might have made her a martyr in her own eyes, but physically they had shaken her up thoroughly. The heroism of keeping her honour intact gave her great psychological satisfaction, but in the grip of those deadly pangs of hunger, her heroism was fast on the wane.

On the evening of the fourth day, going along a street, she entered a house on a sudden impulse. For a moment the fear of being noticed troubled her. She knew that she was in no position to offer physical resistance. But, she had already advanced too far into the porch to retreat.

In the semi-darkness of the room she could dimly see two pitchers perched on their stands. Alongside were two plates of full of fruits — peaches, apples, pomegranates. Pomegranates, she thought, would take too long to open and apples, and peaches would do. One of the pitchers was covered with a porcelain cup with a saucer on it. She removed the saucer and discovered that the cup was full of cream.

Without a moment's hesitation she poured it down her throat. It was a moment of supreme satisfaction; and it made her forget that she was an intruder in the house. There was soup too, lying under the pitcher stand, cold, but she drank it all. The sudden food intake made her dizzy. Someone coughed nearby and she tried to escape. But before she could do so, she had collapsed on the floor.

She regained consciousness to find herself lying in a clean bed. A suspicion came into her mind. Was she safe? Something within her assured her that she was.

Her thoughts were interrupted by the sound of a feeble cough, and then a long thin creature, almost a skeleton, rose before her.

In her own village, Sakina had seen a number of famished people, but this one looked different. There was hunger in his eyes, but not for food. The eyes of people with hungry stomachs reflect a ludicrous greed. In his eyes she noticed a sort of foggy curtain, from behind which the man peeped out at her. In a situation like that it was she who should have felt frightened. But it seemed to other

way round. With an awkward shyness the man said, "When you were eating I was only a little away from you. Oh, with what an effort I stopped myself from coughing, so that you could eat in peace and I could enjoy watching that moment of bliss a little longer. For hunger is a boon of which I have been completely deprived. Deprived? No, that is not true. The fact is that I have willed it myself".

For Sakina it was all a riddle. The more she tried to solve it, the more confused she became. But there was something in his talk that impressed her. She actually felt a strange warmth towards the man and was impelled to tell him of her forced fasting. He listened silently, as if unmoved. But when Sakina thanked him, his eyes that seemed to be tearless. Suddenly became moist. He said in a choked voice "Stay here Sakina". For me it will be a pleasure to see someone eat". Then as if realising the very absurdity of his suggestion he tried to smile and said "It sounds silly. Doesn't it? That someone should eat to be watched? No, Sakina, the fact is that I want you to stay here".

Haltingly Sakina said to him "No. I don't think... What I mean is... the thing is that you are all alone in this house. I am... No, the thing is that I..." she left the sentence incomplete.

Her words seemed to have a stunned him, and for a moment he looked lost. Then, in an almost inaudible voice he said

"For ten years I have taught girls and always treated them as my own children. You will just be an additional child".

Sakina had nowhere to go. So she agreed to stay. The professor survived only one year and some months; and all the time instead of Sakina looking after him, he busied himself with taking care of her comforts. He was like a man hastily finishing his incomplete task before leaving on his last journey.

Under his loving care Sakina blossomed. The professor deliberately kept himself at a distance without letting her notice. Then one day his health took a turn for the worse. One night when Sakina sat by his bedside watching him, he awoke with a start, crying her name.

It happened so suddenly that she was unnerved. But as she took control of herself she noticed that the foggy curtain in his eyes was gone. For the first time she could see some immeasurable pain lay in them. He took her hand in his own. "My hour has come", he told her. "I am not afraid of death. For within me many such deaths have occurred before. Would you like to hear my story? Do you want to know my real life, Sakina? Then listen. I am a fraud — a great fraud! All my life I have practised self-deception. What a painful, unnatural, unhuman way of living. All my life I was under the illusion that if I kill my desires I will live peacefully. Little did I

know that killing one desire would lead to the murder of many more."

He went on, "I closed one door to my physical satisfaction not knowing that one day I will be trapped in a prison of my own making. I thought that by doing so I was exalting my character, not knowing that by doing so I was slipping deeper and deeper into a morass. I know that when I die this holowness of my character will hover over the very dust of my body. The girls whom I taught will remember me as an anger in the sight of men. Even you will remember the good deeds I have done you, yet ever since you entered this house, there has not been a moment when I did not cast lustful eyes on you. How many times have I visualized touching your lips with mine, resting my head on your bosom. Every time I smashed those visions to pieces. I burned the lute to ashes, so that not a trace would remain.

"I will die shortly. I wish had the moral courage to display my true character like a monkey on a pole, to invite people by beat of drum to come and see me and learn a lesson!"

The professor lived for only five more days after this and, Sakina told me, all the time his face was lit up with the joy of a man at peace with himself. He last words were "Sakina, I am not a greedy man. For me these five days have been more than enough and I am grateful..."

Bombay Seminar Lauds Guru Teg Bahadur

Gazette News Service

Hindu-Sikh unity was, very appropriately, the dominating theme of the Seminar held in Bombay on 10 December 1986 as "Homage to the Saviour of Humanity" in tribute to the 9th Sikh guru, Guru Teg Bahadur who gave his life for the cause of religious tolerance. The meeting was organised by the *Sikh Forum* and the *Rashtriya Ek Joot*. About one thousand people attended the Seminar which also marked the inauguration of the Maharashtra Unit of the Sikh Forum by General Jagjit Singh Aurora, President of the "Sikh Forum".

The objective of the Seminar was to focus public attention on Guru Teg Bahadur's teachings. Messages were received from the Governor of Maharashtra, Mr Shankar Dayal Sharma and eminent scholar of Sikh studies Dr. J.P. Waswani from Pune. He talked of the message of peace preached by the Guru as did many of the speakers at the Seminar. Dr. Arvind Godbole said that Guru Teg Bahadur gave a "practical" form to the message of peace taught by Guru Nanak because he travelled extensively throughout the country. The Guru's martyrdom was one of the most inspiring and touching episodes in our history, said Dr Godbole, and appealed "let us do some in-

tropection to plan our future actions."

The President of "Hindustani Andolan", Mr Madhu Mehta called for Hindu-Sikh unity. People now keep guns in mandirs and gurudwaras, he said, and are not following the teachings of their religions. They are instead following a few selfish persons seeking the "chair". Pointing out that Hindus do not trust Sikhs and Sikhs do not trust Hindus, Mr Nari Gursahani stressed that these attitudes are denying the historical truth of communal harmony. Entire communities should not be blamed for the deeds of a few bad elements. He called for the publishing of the Mishra and Thakkar Commission reports.

This demand was echoed by Mr Pramod Mahajan, M.P. who also demanded that the Jodhpur detenus be released and these guilty of the November 1984 carbage be punished. He congratulated "The Sikh Forum" and "Rashtriya Ek Joot" for coming together on the same platform to bring people together. Religion brings people together, he said, and added his voice to the appeal for Hindu-Sikh unity.

Film actor Dara Singh spoke out in the same vein. India belongs to all of us, he said, the

quarrel among the people is not on religious grounds, but for the "kursi". Politics is responsible for the problems, so let us all unite for peace. Mr. I.K. Gujral, former Union Minister and convener of the Punjab Group made it clear that Sikhs in India are not living on anyone's charity. He appealed for national integrity and a united protest against all injustices.

Inaugurating the Maharashtra Unit of "The Sikh Forum", General Aurora spoke of the scars left by Operation Blue Star and the other events which followed, on the entire Sikh community. "There is no doubt that the Government did do injustice to us" he said "But taking to terrorism is no way to express one's anguish resulting from that injustice." He pointed out that Sikhs must save the lives of innocent people, and called on Hindus and Sikhs to forsake their differences and work for the unity and integrity of the country. He emphasized the great need to follow the teachings of Guru Teg Bahadur for and other Sikh leaders had fought not just for the Sikhs but for the entire nation.

Other speakers made similar appeals and all who spoke highlighted the need to emulate Guru Teg Bahadur's ideals which are so relevant to-day.

Amarinder's Call for Constructive Cooperation Between Punjab and Centre

Gazette News Service

Amarinder Singh, who as leader of the dissident Akalis, tried unsuccessfully to move a no-confidence motion against the Barnala Ministry, interviewed in Delhi by the editors of the Gazette.

What are the prospects of a unified Akali government if the Chief Minister resigns?

It has always been our position that the man who orders an attack on the Darbar Sahib is unacceptable. We have said that power is not the central issue for our differences. If a unified Akali Dal were to decide that Balwant Singh should be the Chief Minister, it would be perfectly acceptable to us.

So you make a distinction between the person who ordered the attack and those who supported the decision by not resigning from the cabinet like you did?

We cannot hold that against everybody. The demand in Punjab today is for an Akali government to remain. It is only an Akali government which can tackle the existing situation. We do not believe that an all party or a Congress government can tackle the problem. The problem has become a Sikh problem and it is only the Akalis who can deal with it effectively. But we would not be able to form a government if we were to reject all the 46 members in the Bar-

nala camp. So we feel the man who took the decision to send the security forces into the Golden Temple, let him go.

It's not a time for personal ambition. It is a time for action. Things are slipping, the situation is deteriorating every day.

When you say it is a Sikh problem, do you feel the Punjab aspect, the regional aspect of the problem is now of secondary importance? And what about the feelings and emotions of the sizeable Hindu minority?

We are very concerned about this growing divide. We don't wish it to happen. We believe once the Sikh problem is solved, the problems posed by organisations like the Hindu Suraksha Samiti and Shiv Sena will also die out.

We feel very concerned about the 58 lakh Hindus in Punjab and the 37 lakh Sikh outside. The Hindus are part of our heritage and we wish to remain very closely associated with them.

If you did form a government, how would you go about creating confidence in the Hindus. Let us be clear about one thing. There will be no miracle cure. Killings like Muktsar and Kudla will probably continue to take place now and again.

A beginning has to be made.



There must be unity between like-minded democratic forces. That is why we have called for a round table conference of all like-minded parties. We have also said call Baba Joginder Singh, the Taksal, the Federation boys and Barnala. It is time we all sat together. We may have our differences over Punjab, but our future lies in Punjab; we want peace.

If the government you would like to see in Punjab assumes office, how would it deal with those who are angry but not terrorists and those who have already taken to terrorism?

I think that dividing live

exists. There has to be a full scale political offensive by a unified Akali Dal — especially in the most affected border districts. The Majha area has virtually been abandoned by the Chief Minister. When in January the declaration of Khalistan was made, a political initiative should have been undertaken. But Barnala has stayed away. He has been unable to penetrate the area.

I also think there was a silly reaction to the declaration in the rest of the nation. If five people announce 'Khalistan', it doesn't mean Khalistan has come into being.

A united Akali Dal would have to move into the area and the law and order machinery would have to deal with those who refuse to give up terrorism.

What would be the nature of the political offensive?

It's a question of explaining to the people that they are on the wrong track. We have been going into the area and our meetings have been largely attended. Our impression is that the people want peace. They are also very concerned about the economic situation, which is causing great alarm. About 650,000 youth are coming into the job market every year. But there are very few jobs available. Almost 35% of the industry in the state is sick. The people

know that peace is essential before any major economic investment can take place.

If a new government comes into power, will there be a need for another Accord to back it up?

Yes, there will have to be an understanding. No Punjab government can tackle the problem on its own. If the border with Pakistan has to be fenced, the Centre has to do it. If there has to be a massive infusion of investment, again it has to come from the Centre. And there has to be the necessary will in Delhi to support the government in power, through constructive co-operation. No Akali government can govern by being subservient to Delhi. This was Barnala's problem. He sold himself out to the Centre completely.

Is there any identity of ideas between Badal, Tohra and you? Is it correct that there are serious differences between the three of you?

We may have our differences off and on when we are deliberating on party matters. But we are all disciplined enough to act according to decisions that are adopted by the party.

What is important is we are all democrats, we all believe in the unity of the country. We all believe that Sikhs are and should continue to be part of the national mainstream.

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AMARJIT SINGH
MANAGING DIRECTOR.

Madhu Kishwar . . .

Continued from page 15, col. 3

and our government is moving are used by repressive regimes in the direction of arming itself with more and more such weapons. We should not forget the way the National Security Act, the MISA the Anti Terrorist Act, have been used to harass innocent people. Recently, a law has been passed enabling government to censor private mail. And this bill gives government another weapon to censor and harass the press.

I would support a campaign that appealed to people's good sense, people's dignity and conscience, that explained to people the harmfulness of media denigration of women. But to hand government a stick to beat up people is not likely to change people's opinions. There is no evidence that the officers and police who are to implement the law have great respect for women. I think while we should persuade people and enter into public debate on the question of representation of women, this should be in the context of respect of people's right to decide for themselves what they want to read and view. This is part of the fundamental right to freedom of speech and expression. We not assist government to subvert the fundamental rights in this fashion.

Question: Do you then think that people should actively fight against such legislation and ask for it to be dismissed?

Answer: The fight should be against not only this bill but many pieces of legislation that have been passed in recent

years without sufficient protest being voiced by concerned citizens. Such are the Disturbed Areas Act, the Anti-Terrorist Act, the NSA and many others. The legislation we need today is that which gives more rights to people, restrains the power of the bureaucracy, makes it more accountable, not legislation which gives government more power over people.

It is unfortunate that instead of demanding more rights, some groups seem to be demanding more repression. Certain groups have asked that religious texts also be included in the purview of the Bill. To demand that all aspects of people's lives come under government control when government is as irresponsible as it is, is to ask for trouble. Such legislation can conceivably be used to ban important works of literature and art.

Question: How then do you perceive the intentions of Margaret Alva and the government?

Answer: It suits these politicians to pretend to be saviours of the nation while actually preparing the ground for more tyrannical abuse of power. This is a trend we have been witnessing for several years so there is no reason to believe that the intentions are any different in this case. Considering the record of government in non implementation laws; eg. the Anti-Dowry Act of 1961, we should not be surprised at the non-serious way this bill is drafted. Anyone who really cared about the dignity of human beings, the dignity to women would have come up with something more sensible.

assassination. It would also not have unleashed a blistering attack on the dissidents in the Akali Dal by accusing them of encouraging or condoning terrorism.

When factionalism splits the Akalis, when Sikh politicians exploit the religious idiom for grabbing political power, or when the law of the gun takes command over politics, there is a tendency to cry wolf and to panic. The Prime Minister, his colleagues, the bureaucracy and much of the media-everybody joins in to condemn the climate of factionalism, violence, fundamentalism and terrorism in Punjab. There is no doubt that Punjab, and particularly the Akalis, have been guilty of all these deadly sins. But politics and politicians in Punjab and other states only reflect their godfathers and mothers in the nation's capital. Thus in many ways a break through in Punjab awaits a new direction from the Centre.

If the directionless way of current thinking on Punjab persists, then all that can be expected is more bullets and reprisals and more deaths in police custody and encounters.

Ritu Menon . . .

Continued from page 15, col. 5

government actually does that?

Answer: By and large, no. But that is not to say that they are willfully or deliberately incompetent, rather the mechanisms have not encouraged such communication.

Question: Recently, I know that you and several other women met with Margaret Alva. Did you feel she was responsive to what you had to say and the recommendations you made?

Answer: She took our recommendations and said that before the bill was enacted and presented before the Lok Sabha it would go to the Law Commission, as it stands. So she may incorporate some of our suggestions but I felt she was more defensive than responsive.

Question: Why do you feel such legislation, will actually monitor advertisers and curb them from presenting negative images of women?

Answer: Well, any legislation by itself won't do so. What it does is provide you with a facility. At the moment that facility rests with the government because it is the sole enforcing agent. What we had suggested was that this enabling part of the legislation be made open to third parties, just as social litigation has allowed for it. So the question of legislation by itself is always seen as an enabling tool. If such a pro-

vision exists that would allow for safeguard rights or allow for enforcement by a third party, then it can be used to monitor the actions of advertisers

Question: It also leaves a great deal of room for misuse, as well.

Answer: Yes it does which is why we have objected to the bill as it stands.

Question: The alternative legislation you suggest will not be prone to misuse?

Answer: If it is limited to advertising, if it allows for third party intervention in the interests of safeguards and enforcement then it might be possible. Again, I do understand the limitations, but if there is no regulation, there is absolutely nothing which will stop this kind of obscenity and indecent representation of women.

Question: Can't agitation against the idecent representation of women take different forms?

Answer: Two things. I don't think that once legislation exists all other activities stop, campaigning continues as does mobilising public opinion. These two activities proceed side by side and if you were to stop one the other would automatically become ineffective. Public opinion by itself without having the power to actually make for radical change will not accomplish anything.

Question: Do you feel that the third party intervention will be anything more than the govt. acknowledging concerns but dismissing them when it comes to actually taking decisions.

Answer: There have been cases where third party intervention has made a difference. It is not as though only tekensim prevails. The machinery is not as responsive as it should be, but without that facility there would be no recourse at all. So the question I would like to ask is in the absence of legislation, and in the absence of the facility for a third party intervention what is the recourse that one take.

Question: So where do you go from here?

Answer: With the Muslim Women's Bill we actually tried to do a great deal, not just us, but many people across the country, across religious and political groups, and that was an extremely discouraging experience. To me it demonstrated that however concerted the action might be it does not necessarily have any impact on legislation. So the question that arises is what is the use of such action? I think in this particular case if a controversy is raised, debate is generated and it will at least help in clearing misconceptions about the need for a bill like this and its supposed benefits. □

Punjab Struggles . . .

Continued from page 11, col. 5

killing of innocent pilgrims in Operation Bluestar. (This is a question quite apart from the rights and wrongs of the Operation); 2) The carnage in Delhi; 3) Mr Rajiv Gandhi's speech about the earth shaking when a big tree falls; 4) The refusal for a long time to institute any enquiry into the killings and on the contrary the action taken against some Sikhs acting in self-defence; 5) The terms of reference of the Mishra Commission when it was finally appointed were changed to suit the government and the consequent "watering down" of affidavits and the procedures adopted by the Commission, all create bitter resentment in the youth. Their reaction is that there is no justice for Sikhs and if this is so where do they go from here? Somehow, Dilawri states, these grievances must be tackled, the hurt must be assuaged. One step would be to punish the guilty of the Delhi killings, another to try and ensure that there is no discrimination in the treatment of any community vis a vis the other. The youngsters point at the double standards used in dealing with the Hindu hijackers of the Congress (I) and the Sikhs as one glaring example. Equal justice must be seen to be done and must be done if the young Sikhs are to resume their place in the mainstream.

Somehow, Dilawri told the

Gazette, people must understand the state of the mind of the youth. Why don't eminent Sikhs and Hindus — he cited members of the Punjab Group as an example — go to the Pun-

jab and stand on the same platform, at all the universities and other institutions, and carry on a frank dialogue with the students. "Every student in the state is angry" he said, and the only way to defuse the emotions is to discuss everything openly. Without this there can be no solution. ●

Bullets in Punjab . . .

Continued from page 1, col. 5

core, are feeding each other with the wherewithal to pursue their desperate designs.

Ghastly Happenings, Tense Atmosphere

The ghastly happenings in Muktsar and Hoshiarpur; the tense and uncertain social atmosphere in Punjab's villages and towns where angry young-men are being harassed, detained and killed by the security forces in the name of combating terrorism and both Hindus and Sikhs are falling to terrorist bullets — this grim scenario is destroying the spirit of tolerance and cooperation which is so essential for healthy community relations. This is happening because the government in Delhi has found it politically convenient to project the Punjab problem as being one of Sikhs against the rest of the nation. If this had not been the case it would not have equated terrorism with anger and alienation; it would not have treated the soldiers who left their regiments after Bluestar as deserters; it would not have condoned mass murder of Sikhs in the wake of Indira Gandhi's

Did You Know The Question Mark Over 'Khalistan'

The Sangat at the Akal Takht was deliberating on the issue of Khalistan. A young Sikh moved out of the complex to the bazaar where an elderly Sikh who had been selling peanuts for decades enquired about the developments in the meeting inside. The youngman briefed him and said "I think they will decide to make Khalistan". The old man told the youngman that despite all this talk, Khalistan was never going to be achieved.

Of course it might be plausible if the youngman could answer his question correctly. The elder Sikh then posed the question: "My father had two sons. One of them is settled in Canada and is doing well, where is his other son?"

The youngman pondered for a while and then quipped, "He must be in England."

"No" said the old man.

"Then he must be in the USA." Again the answer was "No!" "Perhaps in Germany."

"No!" "Then he must be in Dubai." "No!" shot back the old man once again.

The youngman gave up and looked pleadingly for the correct answer.

And pat came the reply: "Idiot, here he is sitting in front of the Golden Temple selling peanuts."

The youngman rushed back to the place where the deliberations were going on. He snatched the mike and announced that Khalistan could not be realised till the Sangat (gathering) answered his question. He addressed the gathering with the question: "My father had two sons. One of them is settled in Canada, where is the other one?"

There was a repetition of the same wrong answers.

Then the audience gave up.

And the youngman, in a hurry to unwind his wisdom, blasted back "Fools, he is sitting outside selling peanuts!"

Controversial Bill to Prevent Indecent Representation of Women

Jyotsna Uppal

A Very Shabby Piece of Legislation — says Madhu Kishwar

Question: What are your major objections to the Bill as it stands?

Answer: First of all, it is a very shabby piece of legislation. A legal quack could have done a better job by consulting elementary textbooks on the subject. The way the bill is drafted shows that the government does not care to make implementable laws. This represents a general trend in law making in our country.

Question: What, then, do you think will be the effect of such legislation?

Answer: We are already saddled with a bureaucracy which has vast arbitrary powers, which are mainly used to harass citizens. There is no system of accountability built into this Bill. Even if a government official is held by the court to have wrongly used his powers under the bill to harass someone, he cannot be sued. Thus, the bill provides ample scope for abuse of power, corruption and harassment by government officers.

The definition of "indecent" is very vague. Any one person can complain that his or her morals were injured by a particular representation of women, and this is enough for prosecution. Given the prevalent norms in urban India, where the sight of a woman's ankle or upper arm may be considered obscene this law is

In newspapers, magazines and television there is a daily bombardment by advertisements on the dignity and self-respect of women. All in the name of commercial gain. This degradation and objectification of women concerns not only women's groups and civil libertarians, but everyone who believes in equality of the sexes and the need for media to incorporate democratic meanings into its images and messages.

Many groups and individuals have spoken of the need for some corrective action to prevent the misuse of the female form in advertisements. Changes have also been demanded to ensure that women are not as a rule shown to be subservient to and dependent on

men.

Recently the government introduced "The Indecent Representation of Women (Prohibition) Bill, 1986" in an attempt to meet the demands of enlightened opinion. At the forefront of this official effort has been Ms. Margaret Alva, Minister of State in the Ministry for Human Resources Development, who piloted the Bill through the Rajya Sabha.

However, the Bill has not been as widely welcomed without reservations by women's groups as might have been expected.

Jyotsna Uppal reports on the Bill and interviews Madhu Kishwar, editor of Manushi and Ritu Menon of Kali, an all-women publishing venture.

The Bill makes three major points. First, "indecent representation of women", is defined as the depiction in any manner of the figure of a woman, her form or body or any part thereof in such a way as to have the effect of being indecent or of being derogatory or denigrating women, or being likely to deprave, corrupt or injure the public morality or morals of any person or persons of any class or age group notwithstanding that persons in any other class or age group

may not be similarly affected. Secondly, the bill seeks to prevent this "indecent representation of women" in advertisements, books, paintings and films. Finally, enforcement is left to the discretion of any Gazetted Officer authorised by the State government.

It would seem that this seemingly benevolent gesture on the part of the Centre would be welcomed by all those who Margaret Alva claims, have been demanding that the government take corrective measures to

address this problem. And, many people have applauded the government's initiative. The Bill has, however, also stirred controversy among women's groups who have expressed reservations about its contents, the probability of its implementation and the usefulness of this type of legislation to combat such a problem. Many are arguing that what might seem like one step forward, may actually take women and society two steps backward.

Legislation can be used to campaign against indecent representation

— says Ritu Menon

Question: What are your major objections to the bill as it stands?

Answer: I have three major objections. Except for the area of advertising there does not seem to be the need for fresh



Ritu Menon of 'Kali' — involved with projecting and publishing social, political and literary writing by women.

legislation. Existing legislation covers written and visual media and the Cinematographic Act covers film. Secondly, the definition of indecency being given is extremely loose. It is a difficult term to define but I think they could have made it slightly less arbitrary. As it stands, it leaves a great deal of room for misuse by the gazetted officer enforcing the bill. In fact, when we met Margaret Alva we raised this question of linking indecency to public morality and pointed out the difficulties. While defending it she actually exposed its inadequacies. She

prosecuted under the Bill. Manushi published a report on the November 1984 massacre where several women were interviewed, and described how they were raped by the attackers. Any man could say that these descriptions excited carnal desires in him and corrupted his morality.

Any one person's testimony would be enough for the publication to be seized and confiscated. The case would drag on

gested by some women's group is even wider and as prone to abuse. It includes anything that shows a woman's status as being unequal to a man's. Since woman's is in fact unequal to man's in our society, although in law it is supposed to be equal, any documentation of women's lives could be seen as violative of the law. It would thus be safest for publications to avoid mentioning women at all. Women would become unmentionable if the law were to be taken seriously.

It is naive to believe that the so called "third party", whether it is women's groups or other social action groups, would be able to control the administration and the police. All of us know what the government machinery functions primarily to harass and repress, to violate citizens' fundamental rights, not to enhance them. The police is the biggest violator of the law, and has a glorious record of plunder, looting, killing, torture, rape and atrocities against women and other vulnerable groups. To make or support a law that gives such 'criminals' more powers over our lives is socially irresponsible. And women's groups have also acted irresponsibly in this.

Question: If you do not ask for legislation to address this problem, what do you do?

Answer: I am not in favour of social reform through punishment. Nowhere has this approach of reforming people by beating them up, imprisoning them, hanging them, worked. The leader to Khomeinivad rather than to a healthier society. Strong arm methods

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Madhu Kishwar and Ruth Vanita, editors of Manushi, India's leading magazine about women and society. They are both against the obscenity Bill

bount to lead to abuse. Almost any documentation or depiction of women's lives would become liable to censorship.

The interpretation of this vague definition is left to the investigating officer and finally, to the judge. It is quite conceivable that what one officer considers obscene, another may not.

The Bill can easily be misused to settle other scores, and to persecute small, independent papers and magazines. For instance, a magazine like Manushi which reports on women's lives could easily be

for years and even, if, ultimately, the judge decides the article was not indecent the magazine would have been sufficiently harassed and its reputation damaged in the process. There is also no way for the prosecution to be held accountable.

Question: There are individuals and groups who have considered some of the reservations you have, and have made recommendations providing for third party intervention and for a clearer definition of indecency.

Answer: The definition sug-

herself said notions of public morality differ and what is seen as immoral in Kerala may not be so in Manipur or Tripura or elsewhere. So, of course, that makes it even more whimsical. Thirdly, I have reservations about the sweeping powers the bill gives to the government for search and seizure. There is no room for safeguards or for enforcement that can be used by a third party.

Question: But you do feel there should be some form of legislation for advertising?

Answer: Yes, because I really can't see any other way to control it. Certainly, the industry itself does not have any self monitoring device or code of conduct. So who will regulate?

Question: What would your recommendations be if you could change this bill?

Answer: It should pertain selectively to advertising and only for public display and use.

Question: And your definition of indecent? (taken from a statement released by a coalition of women's groups, of which Ritu Menon is a member).

Answer: "Indecent representation of women" means the depiction or description in any manner, visual or written or oral, of the figure or form or body or any part thereof of a woman, or of the situation or context in which a woman is placed, either by herself or in conjunction with others, such as to have the effect of being violent in character, or derogatory to her dignity as a human being or to her status as an equal to man.

Question: Do you feel that this is an adequate definition?

Answer: No, I think terms like indecency, obscenity, morality are really quite difficult to define fully. Since any definition is exclusive the implication is that having defined it in such and so terms everything that falls outside of it is not, by definition, indecent. These things also keep changing according to the temper of the times, the prevailing code of conduct and social mores so that you can never give a definition which will not have to be continually redefined and modified. But in the absence of a definition where do you go?

Question: So you accept the definition you are giving will eventually have to be modified.

Answer: Inevitably

Question: And who will decide on the changes? will it be left in the hands of the legislature?

Answer: Not necessarily. It should be done in consultation, that is how any kind of redefinition of dowry or rape was done, when there was agitation on both issues. Any drafting will have to take into account a range of opinion.

Question: Do you think the

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